

THE
FEMALE GAMESTER;

OR, THE
PUPIL OF FASHION.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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“ When People adopt Follies, either from Fashion  
“ or Condescension, they suffer themselves to be  
“ hurried away by still more seducing and dan-  
“ gerous Examples.”

MADAME GENLIS.

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THE  
FEMALE GAMESTER:

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LETTER I.

THE EDITOR TO THE READER.

WILLING to save my friends an infinitude of trouble, I have suppressed a vast number of letters that were written in the course of seventeen years, as they contain only a succession of uninteresting details.

For the first six years the Dutchess continued an uninterrupted career of gambling, when the Duke found his finances so reduced as to oblige him to remove his family to the continent; Lady Henrietta

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accompanied

accompanied them. The daughter of the Duke, who was then eight years old, was placed in a convent to be educated, and the son sent to Geneva with his tutor.

Soon after the Duke left England Mr. Froome journeyed "to that bourn from whence no traveller returns." At Florence Lady Henrietta was charmed with a small habitation she saw there; and being in the neighbourhood of her friend Lady Delamere, she took up her residence in that place, well satisfied with the fortune she had acquired from the spoils of the Duke's.—And now, courteous reader, I will once more untie the red tape that confines the remainder of the letters, and arrange them for your perusal.

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LETTER II.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI,

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

*Dover.*

I Have landed on this favourite isle but half an hour, and though the passage was longer than we expected, and I was terribly sick, yet I cannot refrain from snatching up a pen to greet my kind Antonia, and pour all my sorrows in her faithful bosom. Ah! my friend, how cruel has fate been to your Stolina, in depriving her of her dear inestimable mother! I think you are unacquainted with the history of my fainted parent, and only that she was an English woman. The melancholy sensations that lay heavy at my heart incline me to give you her little mournful history; and without preface or apology I shall just transcribe the heads.

My father was second son to the Prince Lucchefini, and as younger children, you know, in Italy, are always sacrificed to promote the grandeur of the eldest, he was made *un religieux*; you know one of their restrictions—they are never permitted to marry. The Lady Mira Belmont at the age of sixteen made the tour of Italy, with her brother the Duke of Wolfingham.—Unfortunately for the Prince my father, he saw this young English beauty at Rome, and became immediately enamoured of her. Fired with the enthusiastic energy which characterizes the natives of Italy, he determined to possess her, though death or destruction ensued; yet how to proceed he knew not—bound down by the rigid fetters of his profession. He execrated his fate, country, and family. A thousand times did he regret being born a Prince; “Had I been an Englishman,” he would exclaim, “I had been free, and might have aspired to this adorable woman; but, a slave from my birth, I am bound to everlasting misery—I will enfranchise myself, or perish.”

The Prince had a friend named Henrique;—to him he imparted his secret,  
and



and received for advice to absent himself from Italy for some time, and Henrique would exert all his family interest (which was very great) in the interval to gain a dispensation for Lucchefini. His father and brother, indeed, were great bulwarks against it; but to a youthful imagination, heated by the passions, every thing is possible—how to quit the object of his adoration was a task, however, not so easy to be accomplished.

To a lover nothing is derogatory or too arduous. The friends resolved that the Prince should accompany Lady Mira in the capacity of her brother's valet, and for this purpose Henrique bribed the Duke's valet from his service, and my father was hired in his stead;—so much for the contrivance of that little urchin Cupid.

In the humble capacity, then, of a domestic, the Prince Lucchefini accompanied the Duke of Wolfingham and his beautiful sister through the tour of Italy and Germany, and returned with them to England. In the interval, you may suppose, the Prince was not deficient to interest the charming Mira in his cause; he revealed to her his history, gained her



love, and they were privately married. Meantime Henrique exerted himself to the utmost, and happily succeeded;—the presence of Lucchefini was alone wanted.—Accordingly he was desired to return to Rome immediately with the utmost privacy, as the implacable hatred of his brother had delayed the proceedings, and his rancour was such (fearing his father would make some provision for his brother) as to dread private assassination.

Mira accompanied her husband, but was pursued by her brother, and separated from him; upon this the Prince imparted the whole story to the Duke, but he turned a deaf ear to it, and treated it as a fabrication. By some stratagem, however, he stole his wife once more from her brother, and, proceeding on their journey, arrived safe at the place of their destination. Here he was received by his friend with much pleasure, and the business for which he came being satisfactorily finished, he paid his respects to his father at Naples, and presented to him his wife. The old nobleman being of an easy indolent disposition, received them with some degree of pleasure, and my father's brother being in Switzerland,

Switzerland, they remained at the palace near a twelvemonth. In the interval my mother had repeatedly written to the Duke her brother, but her letters were always enclosed in a blank envelope, and returned.

At length Cefario, my father's brother, returned. He affected the utmost cordiality towards my father and mother; and at this period I being born, declared he would adopt me for his own. Detestable artifice! cruel unfeeling man! It was not more than three weeks after his return, that my poor father was found murdered in the street. Too surely this base act was the work of his hands!

The grief of my mother was intense, but she resolved to nobly exert herself, and live for the sake of her child. Her fortune had been remitted to Italy by her brother, immediately on her arrival there—but a small sum remained, and this was the whole of her dependance. Unable to remain in the place where her husband had been murdered, she removed to Milan, and wrote once more to supplicate her brother's forgiveness. At the same time she addressed the steward of the Duke, to request,

quest, in case her brother remained inexorable, he would with her small fortune purchase a life annuity for her in England. The letter to the Duke was one more returned, and the steward complying with her request, she settled herself in retirement, and devoted herself to the care and education of your Stolina.

Alone, retired, without connexions or variety, the griefs of her heart preyed on her constitution; and the jaunts she was compelled to make by order of her physician, occasioned her to commit me for months to the care of the Lady Abbess of the convent where our intimacy commenced. Ah! never can I forget the joy I used to feel on being pressed to her dear bosom on her return—nor the sorrow I experienced at parting from her, when she would bedew my face with her tears.—“It is for your sake, my child, (she would exclaim) that I am thus content to live and suffer. Alas! the small pittance that now supports you dies with me!”—then she would strain me to her poor convulsed heart, and sob over me till the attendant came and dragged me from her.

For

For the last four years, you know, I accompanied her; it was at Montablane that she was attacked by those violent spasms on her breast which her doctor prognosticated would terminate her existence. Ah! fatal day.—In an interval from agony she called me:—"In a short time, my darling," said she, pressing my hand between her icy ones, "and the struggles I have long combated will be over. Alas! I leave you young, beautiful, and destitute;—from the relations of your father you have nothing to expect—and I fear little from mine. Yet that nobleness of heart which I am conscious is my brother's, leads me to hope, if he yet lives, his humanity will induce him to protect the orphan of his unfortunate sister. My death will appease the anger I have incurred, and your helpless state will be a strong claim on his heart. Promise me, then, my beloved, to go to England, as soon as my remains are committed to the earth. If Wolsingham *should* reject you, you always have an asylum in the convent where the Marchioness Orfino is—but I conjure you first to seek the protection of your uncle. I have saved for you two



hundred pounds. Alas! the sum is small, but I could no more!"

I could scarcely answer her, being almost suffocated by the emotions that overcame me. Soon after, she relapsed into convulsions, and expired in my arms! To describe my grief is impossible, for she was unequalled.

I have complied with her last request;—am in England, a foreign country, without a friend or acquaintance, have a family who came over in the packet-boat, who have shewn me a deal of politeness, and requested I will honour them with a visit. They reside at Enfield, a country town about ten miles from London; the family consists of Mr. and Mrs. Blandford, and an only daughter. I shall certainly pay them my respects.—And now, dearest Antonia, I will bid you adieu, feeling myself much fatigued and sleepy. Tomorrow I set out for the capital.

Farewell,

STOLINA LUCCHESINI.

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LETTER III.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

AH! my dear Antonia, pity your poor friend, who has experienced the cruellest disappointment! The Duke of Wolsingham is not in England! Immediately on my arrival I proceeded in the chaise to Grosvenor-square;—the window-shutters were closed, a cross kind of man opened the door. I enquired if the Duke was at home? “No,” he replied, “he has been from home long enough.” “Where was he?” “Why in some foreign parts, among the French, and the devil knows who.” “How long had he been absent?” “Many a year.” “Did he expect him home?” “Ah! God knows when.”—It was impossible to make any thing of this man.

The driver enquired where I pleased to go.—I could not tell. “Would I go to an inn?” I answered in the affirmative, and

and accordingly was in a short time set down at one in a street called Piccadilly. The mistress attended me, and after partaking of a chicken, I retired to bed, but not to sleep;—the forlornness of my situation fully employed my thoughts! Alone, in a strange country—what was I to do! I formed a thousand chimeras, and arose in the morning unrefreshed and unhappy.

I passed the day partly at the window, amusing myself with the great diversity the street afforded, and making some remarks on the English. You know my mother brought me up entirely in the English way, yet many things have already appeared very *nouvelle* and surprising—but of them hereafter. While I was gazing at the window, I perceived Mr. Blandford pass, and then for the first time I recollected the friendship they had offered me; and ordering a post-chaise, I stepped into it, and directed the man to Mr. Blandford's at Enfield. When I arrived there, the door was opened by a servant in an elegant livery, and I was shewn into a parlour, where Miss Blandford was seated at her piano, turning over some music, and her mother by a table at work. A young gentleman

gentleman was also in the room. They all arose on my entrance, and expressed the pleasure my visit afforded them.

After some common-place subjects, such as how I liked England, and whether I was recovered from the fatigues of my journey, Miss Blandford enquired in what part of the town I resided. "My situation, Madam, (replied I) is somewhat singular, and peculiarly distressing. I came to England to claim the protection of an uncle, who, I find, is unfortunately absent from his home, and it is uncertain when he is expected to return;—I am at present, therefore, only at an inn."

"Bless me, how surprising!" exclaimed the young lady, "and pray, Mademoiselle, what do you purpose doing?"—"I am quite undetermined, (answered I) but I believe the most eligible plan will be to engage private lodgings till my relations return. If you, madam, will interest yourself so far for a stranger as to put me in a right method how to proceed, I shall hold myself particularly obliged to you."—She made some reply, which I could not perfectly hear, but which I conceived to be an acquiescence.

Something



Something like a pause followed — happening to raise my head I was much disturbed to see the eyes of the gentleman intently fixed on me; and a disgusting sneer on his countenance — “ May I ask,” said Mrs. Blandford, “ the name of your uncle?” — “ Certainly,” I replied, “ it is the Duke of Wolfingham.”

The domestic now entered with some refreshments, which caused another pause in the conversation; but when he retired, Mrs. Blandford again resumed. “ You are very young, mademoiselle, and it has a strange appearance for a person of your rank to come to a foreign country entirely alone, to a relation who was not prepared to receive you; but if the Duke of Wolfingham is your uncle, it is proper you should have some respectable protectors till his return. I remember well his wife’s name used to be for ever in the newspapers; she lost enormous sums at Newmarket; and they were compelled to leave the kingdom. — Have you no parents?” “ Alas! no,” replied I, the tears starting from my eyes, “ the sable I now wear is for the dearest, best of mothers; my father died when I

was

was an infant.”—“ Well, mademoiselle, if you please, my house is at your service till the Duke’s return.” Antonia, you know my heart, and can judge of my emotions. I threw myself at her feet, and bathing her hand with my tears, thanked her again and again for her noble and generous treatment to an entire stranger.

Mr. Blandford now came in; his wife informed him of what had passed—he shook me by the hand, and welcomed me to the house in the most cordial manner. He is a true Englishman; open, free and blunt. “ You must know,” said he, “ I am not over and above fond of your foreign women, your mademoiselles; but you look quite like an English woman; and then you speak the language so perfect, that I liked you the first moment I saw you.”

The general allusion did not take away the goodness of the intention; and I thanked him for his kindness with a sincerity that came from my heart. I returned to the inn for my trunk; and when I came back, Miss Blandford, in the most friendly and polite manner, shewed me my room; it is pretty and genteel, but rather small, with  
a little

a little dressing-room adjoining it. I am somewhat fatigued, and will bid you good night. To-morrow I shall address you again.

Your's,

STOLINA.

LETTER

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LETTER IV.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

MR. Blandford was a silversmith in the city, and had raised himself from a poor boy to a man of some repute, when dame Fortune threw into his possession, through the medium of the lottery, a twenty thousand pounds prize; immediately on possession of this he retired from trade, and took up his residence at Enfield. Juliana is their only child, and the reputed heiress of thirty thousand pounds; you may believe, therefore, her train of admirers are very numerous; for I find, in England, there are few or no love matches. Master Cupid having resigned his empire here to good old Plutus, I am told likewise, all the men are mercenary, and most of the women ambitious.

But to return to Juliana. Her person is rather plain; a long nose, and poor teeth; but her disposition appears mild, and her manners polite. It is true, my acquaintance

tance is of too short a duration to enable me to be a competent judge; in her voice there is something peculiar discordant, being flat, monotonous and drawling; and a kind of jerking laugh, that gives the fiat to most of her speeches, adds to its unpleasantness — she appears an extravagant, without being an elegant dresser; the moment any thing new presents itself she must have it; and she does not feel (as I should) any repugnance in copying every body.

Mrs. Blandford is a mild-disposed, open, plain woman, something like her husband; she had laboured a long time under a disagreeable bilious complaint, for which she was ordered by her doctor to Lisbon; and it was from thence they were returning when our acquaintance commenced.

The favourite lover of Juliana is a Mr. Saville, the same who was there on my first visit; he is the son of a banker, and in my opinion a most unpleasant man — but if I mistake not, there is yet a greater favourite than he; that is, he would be, if he was unmarried. His name is St. George; he is really a fine man, and his wife a delicate little woman, with a pair of the most charming black eyes in the world.

Yesterday

Yesterday was Sunday ; and I accompanied Miss Blandford and Mr. Saville into a public walk in London, called Hyde Park ; I cannot say I was much pleased with the place—it is separated into three parts ; the promenade, for those who walk, is gravelled ; and I suppose is about a mile and a quarter long ; close to that is a path considerably broader for those on horse-back ; and at a considerable distance is the road for carriages ; so far indeed, that you can just see them move ; I was by no means entertained ; the English people are certainly very rude—the men stared at me so prodigiously that I really was disturbed—some popped their head quite in my face—others laughed quite loud, and shewed their teeth.

A great many knew Miss Blandford ; and how do you think they paid their respects to her ; not as one would imagine, with a low bow, and a polite enquiry after her health, and that of her family, but without touching their hats, they nod their heads familiarly, and just say, “ Ha ! how d’ye do ? ”—others bend their body forward a little, and put their hands to their hats.

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If this is the custom of the country, it is very gross and unpolished. I think no fashion should so pervert the manners as to do away a proper respect from one sex to the other.

Two gentlemen, as they passed, nodded to Mr. Saville, and thus exclaimed quite loud — “ Charles, strike close to the heirs.” How shocking and indelicate; yet, when I cast a sympathizing look at Miss Blandford, supposing she was ready to sink with confusion, I perceived the speech had a contrary effect; for she was laughing. — Many more things excited my amazement; but one really called forth my indignation. — A little lounging man, after staring me full in the face, exclaimed — “ Sweet creature!” Really alarmed, I intreated Miss Blandford to leave the place, for I could not like staying where people were subject to such insults — “ My dear creature,” replied she, “ were you to live in London, you would be thus insulted every time you walked out; and though a gentleman should be with you, or a servant behind you, yet the lower class will be free to utter their thoughts.”

You

You may believe I was not sorry when we left this place. We dined in the city, at Mr. Saville's father's, and returned in the evening in their carriage. Mr. Blandford enquired how I had passed the day; and I candidly gave him my sentiments. He said, "I was very right, for all the young men now were puppies." Mr. Saville shrunk up his shoulders, and looked sneeringly. Adieu! adieu!

Dear Antonia, believe me eternally,

Your's,

STOLINA.

LETTER


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LETTER V.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I Am, dearest Antonia, not by any means pleased with my situation. Miss Blandford is not what I supposed her ; she is extremely selfish, and very peevish — there is at this place assemblies ; and the etiquette is such, that no persons, who have been in trade, or do not keep a carriage, (or some equally trivial thing, though I know not rightly what) are admitted ; non-residents and foreigners however are exceptions.

You know, from having spent most of my youth in a convent ; from the reclused manner of my mother's life, and the little journies in which I accompanied her, prevented my ever partaking of any kind of amusement.

You may suppose that I have that innate curiosity, as to make me desirous of seeing something of the world ; when I heard yesterday, at breakfast, there was to be an  
assembly

assembly this evening, I expressed something like a desire to partake of the amusement—"La, my dear, we are not admitted," said Miss Blandford."—"I do not rightly understand you, ma'am," replied I. "Why, there is some etiquette that debar us from going?" "Does it extend to me, ma'am?"—"Oh, no; all strangers are admitted—but you could not go by yourself, mademoiselle." "Could I not?" "I am sure I don't know—Go by yourself, bless me! Do they do so where you come from?"—"I never was at an assembly, ma'am; and it is for that reason I had some wish to go."—"But you see you can't," said she, peevishly. "If it is improper, I do not wish, but I suppose there is some of your acquaintance going that would suffer me to accompany them."—"No, no," returned she, "we have no acquaintance that goes; if you wanted to go to these places, you should not have come to us."

Astonishment struck me dumb. Oh! thought I, vulgarity of origin will always evince itself—but it was the first time I had ever occasion to make this remark—This conversation took place in Miss Blandford's dressing-

dressiing-room, for Juliana rises much later in the morning than Mr. and Mrs. Blandford; and I, out of compliment to her, waited to breakfast with her, for company's sake. The argument was not renewed; and I retired to my own chamber, which is only separated from her's by a very thin pannel. A short time afterwards, Mrs. Blandford came into her daughter's apartment—"Do you know, mama," said the young lady, "our Italian princess wants to go to the ball to-morrow night, and she has quite given herself airs about it—people that are kept out of charity, should not be so consequential."

At these words my Italian blood indeed fermented—how my heart palpitated—how my temples beat—I, myself the offspring of Princes, to be thus degradingly spoken of by such a contemptible plebian. My agitation was too great to hear any more of the conversation for some time; but when I had reasoned myself into some degree of tranquillity, I heard her, in reply to some speech of her mother's, say, "Phoo, phoo, do'nt tell me, she may belong to the Duke of Wolfingham, and she may not; nobody knows that she does; and Saville says he do'nt

don't think her any more than a French opera girl—then how she coquettes with St. George, and indeed with all the fellows ; but for all her art, she has not yet caught one—No, no, our men are not such fools ; they may stare, but they know better than to marry such."

The indignation that first swelled my heart now gave way to tears ; I felt humbled in my own opinion ; and, for the first time, wished myself in the silent grave.

Antonia, my dear Antonia, I must return to our convent ; it is utterly impossible to brook such treatment.

God bless you.

STOLINA.

*April 27.*



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LETTER VI.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Midnight.

I Am calm, Antonia, no tempestuous passions distort my bosom now, but I have this evening been roused almost to madness. I had been for some time so unwell that the doctor who attended me ordered me to ride on horseback; accordingly I rode out every morning that the servant could be spared to attend me. Miss Blandford, who is too timid to ride herself, envied me the enjoyment I experienced in this recreation, and would endeavour all in her power to prevent the domestic from attending me.

A few nights ago we had a small party to supper. Mrs. St. George asked me, in a casual manner, how I liked the English method of riding; this led to a conversation on the subject—"You cannot ride to-morrow, mademoiselle," said Miss Blandford, "for I shall want to send Richard to town."

Not

Not to shew that her littleness had any effect on me, I replied, smilingly, "that it was very well."—"Oh! sooner than you should be disappointed," said Mrs. St. George, "I am sure my husband will be your squire;" I thanked her from my heart.

Mr. St. George, in the most polite and pressing manner, offered himself; and I was on the point of accepting him, when Miss Blandford said she had recollected herself, and found it was necessary for her to go to town herself; and therefore Richard was at my devotion. This stopped the conversation for the present; but after supper, Mr. St. George, who sat next me, intreated I would sometimes suffer him to have (what he was pleased to term) the honor of accompany me. It would have been downright rudeness to have refused; I therefore acquiesced; and it was agreed he should ride with me as to-morrow.

This evening a note came from St. George, to remind me of my engagement. Miss Blandford, with that mean kind of curiosity, perfectly characteristic, asked to see it, I gave it her—"Bless me," she exclaimed, "surely, you don't mean to
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ride out with St. George?"—"Why not?" enquired I; "because it is improper," returned she, coolly. — "Improper, Miss Blandford; How? in what respect?" — "It has not a good appearance to ride out with a married man; besides, I am sure, Mrs. St. George will not like it."—"Mrs. St. George, ma'am, was the first to propose it; and as I have promised, it is a particular rule with me never to break my word in the most trivial respect."—"Oh, as for Mrs. St. George, she was only in a joke; and, as for an excuse, you can say you are unwell." — "Certainly, Mrs. St. George was not joking; and if I advance a falsity for to-morrow, I cannot always make the same plea; that would be postponing, not breaking the engagement."—"Well, Miss, you shall not go."—"Shall not go, Miss Blandford." — "No; for Mrs. St. George has already declared that she dislikes your coquetting with her husband."

Ah, what a moment was this—the emotions of my heart overcame me; I could not command the power of articulation. At this moment Mr. Saville entered — "Bless me," he exclaimed, "what's the  
matter;

matter ; why Juliana, madamoiselle, you look like two furies ;" and the idiot laughed, as if he had uttered a bon mot.—" Why, here's our Italian princess," exclaimed the lady, " firing off her insolence, because I was good natured enough to point out to her the impropriety of coquetting, and giving encouragement to a married man." " Your aspersions on my conduct, madam, any unprejudiced person must do me the justice to acknowledge are false. Twice, in contempt of me, you have stiled me the Italian princess ; but here you was most right, though unknown to yourself ; and she, whom you have dared to treat thus is, thank heaven, every way superior to her contemptible accuser."

At this she absolutely raved—said every thing that ignorance could coin. I retired from the parlour ; and when I was a little tranquillized I dispatched a polite note, containing my thanks and farewell to the St. George's ; they were from home, but the domestic left the billet.

When Mr. and Mrs. Blandford returned home, for they had spent the evening out, I was summoned to supper—I went down ; they looked very cool. When the servant

had withdrawn, I thanked them for the favours I had received, and made known my intention of going to London in the morning. They made some scruples, and Mr. Blandford was kind enough to say he was sorry to lose his visitor.

This is really a very worthy man; but unfortunately too much under petticoat government. I soon after retired, and gave vent to my over-burdened heart, by writing to you. It is very late—good night, or rather morning; think on, and pray for your poor

STOLINA.

*May 19.*

LETTER

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LETTER VII.~~~~~
THE SAME TO THE SAME.*Air Street.*

ABOUT eleven o'clock on the ensuing morning, I wrote to you last, I went into Miss Blandford's dressing-room, as I understood Mrs. Blandford was there, to take a final leave, the chaise being at the door, and my trunks being all strapped on.—“If I might presume, madam, to take the liberty,” said I, “I would ask for an increase of obligation; that is, if you could inform me of any person with whom I could lodge.”—“I am unacquainted with any people who let lodgings,” she replied coolly; I curtesied, and retired. Miss Blandford's maid who was in the room, followed me—“If you will give me leave, ma'am,” said she, “to recommend you to my sister, I am sure she can accommodate you with very good lodgings.” I thanked the girl, and taking out my pocket book, and giving it her, she wrote down,

Mrs. Collins, Air Street, Piccadilly ; to which place I ordered the driver. You may be sure I rewarded the girl liberally for her kindness.

When I alighted at this place, Mrs. Collins attended ; I informed her who had recommended me, and she shewed me her apartments, which suited me very well. I agreed with her, and took up my station ; for the first week, being alone, I did not stir out ; but I found my health materially injured by the confinement ; I therefore begged Mrs. Collins to let her servant attend me, to which she readily agreed, and I took a walk in the park ; but was very much disturbed by the particular attention and notice that was taken of me by a gentleman. At first he was riding on horse-back ; but giving his horse to his groom, he came and walked, and stared me out of countenance, so much as to make me shorten my airing ; he was a tall, elegant made man, with very fine dark eyes, his countenance was very handsome, but to me by no means pleasing ; his age I suppose to be between thirty and forty. I should not thus particularly describe him, but a few days after I went to the Duke's,
to

to enquire whether the family was expected in town. I had received a negative reply, and was going off the step when the same gentleman came to the door, and made the same enquiry I had just made.

The porter gave him the same answer, but with much more respect, and called him my Lord. I left him talking with the man when I departed. I have a small iota of curiosity to know who he is.

The woman of the house with whom I am is of a sect called Methodists. Finding I never went to church of a Sunday, I suppose she felt a desire to know what religion I was of; so yesterday afternoon, she came into my room, and by way of apology brought me a profusion of very beautiful flowers. After thanking her for her gift, I was led to admire a very beautiful rose. "Ah, madam," said she, "how great and good is the father of all things—in the most trivial thing in nature he is evident." This is a degree of refined moralizing thought I for one in her stile of life. I assented to what she had said, and she proceeded. "What blessing he bestows on us, what comforts we enjoy, and yet the

c 5

generality

generality of people are neither grateful nor happy."

"Are you then content and happy?" demanded I; "yes, perfectly so, ma'am, in one respect, and I hope I am in the other."

She was the first person I had heard avow themselves perfectly happy; and from a careless indolence with which I had listened, I roused myself in order to attend her. "I wish," said I, smiling, "I would wish you to teach me your method of being perfectly happy."—"Nothing, madam," returned she, "is more easy; it is only putting implicit faith in him who died to save us all."

Oh, oh, my friend, thought I, you are trying me. Well, I will indulge you—"Very true, Mrs. Collins," replied I; "but religion will not always solace us."—"Yes, pardon me madam, always."—"What, if a person is struggling with want, if they have no bread, then will it?"—She interrupted me with, "Let them pray, madam, and I warrant you they will be heard; God never refuses to listen to the meanest of his servants."

I now found the woman was a bigot; yet, as she had sought, I was willing to indulge

dulge her, by continuing the argument. —“ Then of course every prayer of your's has been granted ? ” —“ Yes, ma'am, and every body's, who trusts in the Redeemer ! ” —“ Why then, since you have gained every earthly wish, your prayers now are for heaven ? ” —“ Certainly, madam ; ” —“ And you are confident you shall go there ? ” —“ Oh, no ; how can such a sinner as I expect such happiness as that ? ” —“ Why, did you not say, that all those that prayed devoutly were heard ? ” She evaded a reply, by an interrogation. “ If I may be so bold, madam,” said she, “ without giving offence, I would ask what religion you are of ? ” —“ I am a Christian ” —“ But, madam, are you a Protestant or a Catholic ? ” —“ I am a Protestant ” —“ Then you believe in our Saviour ? ” —“ I believe there is but one God, and he is omnipotent. ” —“ But in respect to forms and customs, madam. ” —“ The fabrication of priestcraft ! I know of none. ”

The woman stretched her eyes three degrees wider, and very piously exclaimed, “ Bless me ! ” —“ Pray, ma'am, had you never the sacrament administered ? ” —“ No, never. ”

A second

A second "bless me."—"Why then, ma'am, I suppose you don't believe in purgatory?"

I must proceed no farther, Antonia, with our discourse; for if the Lady Abbess was by chance to see this letter, she would not admit me in the convent, should it be my fate to return. However, after an argument of three hours, we parted.

She recommended me to read Drelincourt on Death; and I gave her Voltaire's Dialogue of the Coloyerien and honest Man. Really, Antonia, I am the salamander, who lives in fire, without being consumed. I spent most of my youth in the midst of the greatest bigotry, yet was never tainted with its absurdities. I adopted my beloved mother's principles, and adhered to them; and the many arguments of father Jerome, the good lady abbess, and my saint like Antonia, could never make a convert of me. Well, this is a phenomenon!

I have had but one letter from you since we parted; do pray write; and believe me, as I always am, your most affectionate and sincere (though heretic) friend,

STOLINA LUCCHESINI.

LETTER

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LETTER VIII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

*Geneva.*

ONCE more, my Henrietta, I am on the eve of beholding my beloved, my adorable country—of returning to dear dear England, after this long and painful exile. Thanks to my good father, who a month ago bequeathed us two hundred thousand guineas. It is scarcely credible that he was worth so much!—thanks to heaven it is so. But, alas! every pleasure has its drawback;—would you believe that my good old man made me give him a solemn promise not to touch a card, ere he would consent to our return; and I being willing to purchase the liberty, promised. He preached to me of the bad example and prejudice it would be to our children, and  
a deal

a deal more of the same stuff; but, Lord have mercy on me, I could not exist without a dependance on dear chance.

But apropos, of my children; (really I must be quite an old woman, having such grown up things.) You never saw such beautiful creatures in your life. I see you smile, and think of the fable of the eagle and the owl; but it is six years since you saw them, and you would be amazed at the change. Theodosia, who is seventeen, is the most demure creature in Christendom, without life or soul—absolutely chalk and water. She is a beautiful statue, for really in person I never saw so lovely a creature in my life;—she is, as you may imagine, her father's darling—she is all sentiment and sensibility, and very often gives me the head-ache and the vapours. “Such, my dear Polyxena,” the Duke will sometimes say, “was you, when I first saw you, but then you was uncontaminated by fashion and folly.”—“You have the prettiest way in the world (answered I) in telling me I am grown old and wicked.”—“Oh, Polyxena,” he will resume, “you are indeed grown too old for such levity!” and this speech is made

made with a face as long as one's arm. —But my boy, my Henry, my darling! is a perfect Adonis, and the very reverse of his sister;—eccentric, wild, impetuous, precipitate, and full of energy—all life and spirits—gay, elegant, and irresistible.—Callous, indeed, must the heart of that woman be, who can see and not adore him. Tall in person, with the finest black eyes in the world, the brilliancy and expression of which speak to the soul; a Roman nose, and teeth—such teeth!—you have envied me mine, but they are nothing to my Henry's. His beautiful auburn hair was yesterday tied and powdered for the first time.

The saucy creature knows how I love him, so he endeavours to mortify me, and play me all the tricks he can. Sometimes he will pinch my poor Bologna dog; then I shriek, and start up in such an alarm! and the good-for-nothing creature will so laugh, and Theodosia will purse up her pretty mouth, and cry, “Fie, brother; how can you frighten her Grace, and hurt the poor dog!”—and then, fool-like, I kiss and chide him in a breath. But, spite of all his pranks, he has the noblest heart,  
and



and the most just cause of honour in the world; and such true veracity of soul as delights even the Duke—who having lavished all his love on his girl, has none remaining for my darling.

We set out for England next week, My Henry goes not with us, but joins us in February.—Adieu, dear Henrietta, believe me as usual,

✓  
Your's,

POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.

*July 30th.*

LETTER

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L E T T E R IX.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

Beaufort Castle.

REJOICE and congratulate me, dearest friend, heaven has pitied my helpless condition and sent me a most noble and beneficent friend.—You remember in my last I mentioned a gentleman to you who I met in the park, and at the Duke of Wolsingham's, well it is him; but I anticipate my narrative.—About ten days ago, I sat reading an English poem, when the servant entered, and told me a gentleman desired to see me: I was fluttered and alarmed, puzzled to know who it could be, as I was entirely unknown, and while the servant went back to learn his name I formed a thousand conjectures, all of them however were erroneous; she returned and informed me the gentleman's name was Lord Fortesque:—still more perplexed, I desired
he

he might be shewn up, and the already mentioned gentleman made his appearance. —I was amazed, and anxious to know the purport of his visit; my agitation was extreme, my heart beat tumultuously, and I was all confusion and terror.—In faint and inarticulate terms I requested he would be seated, and threw myself on the sofa from which I had arose, almost breathless.—Why all this alarm? I have put the question to myself more than once, but am incapable of finding an answer.—“ I should apologize madam,” said he, “ for my intrusion, but I flatter myself the motive will speak for itself.—Learning you was niece to the Duke of Wolsingham, who is my dearest friend, I took the liberty of waiting on you to inquire if it is true that you are the daughter of Lady Mira Belmont, and if so, to offer you the protection of Lady Fortesque till his Grace returns.

By this time I was somewhat recovered, returned him my thanks, authenticated my relationship to his Grace of Wolsingham, inquired where he was, and asked if he was expected to return soon to England?—He replied, the Duke and his family were at present at Vienna, but were expected in
England

England in the course of two months ;— that he had written to him the morning before, but should now write again, to acquaint him of the treasure he had found ; and if I pleased to address him, he would enclose my letter.—I thanked him, and enquired how he had discovered me ? His answer was, Mr. Blandford had mentioned me to him.

He then again asked me if I would honour him by becoming his ward, till my uncle's return ; to which, of course, I gave a grateful acquiescence, and he promised Lady Fortesque should call and take me home with her the next day.—He then enquired if I would address the Duke.—I replied in the affirmative. Afterwards we talked on different subjects, and after spending an hour with me, he took leave till the next day.

When he left me I sat down and wrote a long letter to the Duke, explaining the affair of my mother's marriage, gave a particular account of her death, and enclosed the letter she had left for him.— You may believe this task cost me many tears.

The

The next morning at twelve o'clock a very elegant woman was announced to me as Lady Fortesque ; she addressed me with all that engaging familiarity as if we had been friends for years.—“ My dear creature,” said she, “ you have no idea how happy you make me by consenting to take up your residence with us ; for next week my good Lord goes to one of his country seats for the shooting season, and if chance had not given me such a lovely companion, I should have been ennuied to death in that old castle, quite in the wilds of Scotland.

I took leave of my good landlady, and accompanied Lady Fortesque home to Portland-place ; two servants were sent for my trunks.—The house was superbly magnificent, and the rooms allotted to me beyond description elegant ;—but we staid in that beautiful mansion but three days, and then set out for this castle, where we are to stay two months, which will be about the time that the Duke is expected in England.

The castle is quite in the Gothic taste, large rooms hung with tapestry, and high windows, with small panes of glass.—

The

The pleasure grounds, however, make up for the unpleasantness of the house ; they are most beautiful and extensive.—I could always find variety and entertainment in the gardens, but Lady Fortesque seems dying of *ennui* ; no wonder though, for she has no resources in her self.—Work she hates, music and painting she is unacquainted with, and reading or walking fatigues her.—I therefore make it my study to amuse her ; play to her sometimes the piano or the harp, read aloud, talk to her of Italy, which she is very partial to having an account of ;—but she does not seem so anxious about the customs, the buildings, or the country, as she is to know whether the men are handsome and generous, and the women good dressers ; whether there are many titles, and if they are fond of the English women, and a thousand other questions equally puerile.—I think her education must have been very much neglected. We ride a deal on horseback, for Lady Fortesque has no other amusement ; his Lordship often attends us, and is all kindness and attention to me.—My fingers are quite cramped. Adieu, dear Antonia, believe me to be ever your's,

STOLINA.

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L E T T E R X.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM,

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

YOU may suppose me dying or dead, but have no right to believe me negligent or forgetful.—I have not written to you an age; it seems an age since I knew what comfort was.—I have been annihilated—every vital power and mental faculty has been, *is still* suspended; in such a case I wished not to communicate, dearest friend, even to you, my distress; yet I owe you every mark of confidence, and as the highest proof of my faith in the inviolable honor of your regard, I will briefly hint the sudden cause of my unhappiness and intellectual debility.

Singular as have been my misconduct, misfortunes, and sufferings, they never before utterly subdued my mind; the common routine of affairs generally called off in a short time my attention, and if the  
c. use

cause of my distress was not removed, the effects were suspended.—But now my soul is darkness all—and it is in vain to appeal to reason.—But let me methodize my scattered thoughts, and give you the distressing narration.

We slept at Dover on the fourteenth of last month, and I resolved to drive Theodosia to town the next day in my own phaeton:—the Duke strongly opposed it; but, among other faults, I am grown obstinate—and was determined to have my own way.—He told me I was too careless a driver, and the horses I had with me, too mettlesome.—Theodosia looked pale with fear—the Duke added, he was sure we should have our necks broke.—“Pray my dear mama,” said the girl, “be persuaded to give up your plan.”—I smiled contemptuously. “What a disgusting thing is cowardice and timidity; you may go Theodosia, with your father, for me, I will breathe freely, and not be pent up in a close carriage.” She immediately consented to accompany me, in spite of her father’s persuasion to the contrary.

“No my dear sir,” said she “my timidity did not arise for myself, but for her  
Grace,



Grace, and since she is bent on driving, I certainly will not leave her to her self."—To make short, we set off at eight in the morning, dined at three o'clock at Rochester, where we staid an hour; it was very little more than seven when we came to Shooter's Hill;—but I should have told you I had my two bloods put to the phaeton at Rochester—you know what these charming horses are, but they went on very quietly till we came to Blackheath, and here some confounded animal set up a bellowing, frightened Lightfoot, and off they went; the curb was useless, all my skill thrown away, there was no power of calming them! Theodosia fainted, and I began to be frightened, when a gentleman who was riding threw himself from his horse, and, at the hazard of his life, caught the reins and stopt my furious steeds.—Ah I have since wished I had fell from the vehicle, and been crushed to death! how far, far preferable would it have been than to suffer hourly the pangs I do.—Amidst all my sufferings, Henrietta, you know how often I have rejoiced at the indifference of my heart;—but now I struggle with all the tortures of a hopeless unrequited passion.

—How

—How often have I laughed, when I have heard people say it was every body's destiny to love once ;—but I laugh no more !—ah surely I shall never laugh again.—And who do you suppose this hero, this saviour of our lives—this destroyer of the small fragment of peace that was left me is ?—Why Lexington, the son of my dear Mrs. Newborough ! that beautiful boy, whom you must remember to have seen often at my house, soon after my marriage ;—a sweet fellow with a profusion of flaxen hair, and whom I then called Augustus Newborough ; but he now inherits the title and estate of his late uncle.

There is eight years difference between me and Augustus,—yet had I never seen the Duke,—I might have been happy ;—I might have been spared a world of folly, misery, and care.—This dear son of a dear mother might have been mine, and many years of undisturbed happiness had been my lot.

Oh my God, let not my imagination wander thus, or madness will overtake me ! It is my fate to suffer :—Well, well, let me learn to bear it as I ought.—Will you tell me that I struggle not against this hope-

less passion.—Oh indeed, indeed I do.—I have called to my recollection every thing that reason can urge, but what has passion and reason to do with each other? Alas! I have too long been the slave of the former.—I have not the romance of a girl of eighteen—I should know better; I have lived so many years in various scenes, and now become childish!—I will, I must root out this tormenting malady:—but each day—every time I have seen him, my passion is augmented.—Yet he is an absolute stoic, regards me with such perfect indifference as makes me execrate him, myself, and the whole world.—Oh that he loved me as others have done—Ah! that was too much.

Henrietta, I can no more.—Pity your wretched

POLYXENA.

*September 29.*

LETTER

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LETTER XI.

LADY THEODOSIA MATILDA BELMONT

TO MISS MONTACUTE,

AT THE CONVENT DE.....

Grosvenor Square.

THIS world, my dearest Cecilia, is no Eden ; and its gaities and pleasures are to me painful and irksome. I have known no happiness in the great world to equal the peace and tranquillity of our convent, and I often turn to the recollection of past scenes with sighs of heart-felt regret.—How innocent, how calm and rational did our days pass ! but here I find nothing rational or pleasing.

Was there any thing like happiness, would it not be the lot of my dear mother ?—how many happier beings than herself look up to her with envy !—so exalted, so singularly beautiful, so accomplished, so admired.—But alas ! how trifling are all these ; how unequal to counterpoize with
D 2 misery !

misery!—Ah, I am too sure my beloved mother is wretched, though I know not the cause; I often find her in tears, and she habituates herself to a sternness and insensibility that I am sure is foreign to her nature.—Oh that I could palliate her sorrows!—though heaven knows I am far from happy.

Our dear Henry will have the happiness of beholding my Cecilia next month.—Enviied indulgence! we left him behind us, and he will be in France in November:—be careful of your heart, for my dear brother has all his mother's charms, with an uncommon vivacity, and the polish of the complete gentleman—I think never saw but one man who equalled him in personal charms—but there is certainly one!—you will easily guess that I mean Lord Lexington, whom I mentioned to you in my last,* and whom you rallied me about; to punish you for which I will take leave, and without an apology for my abrupt conclusion, bid you adieu,

Ever Your's,

T. M. BELMONT.

October 7.

LETTER

* Omitted.

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L E T T E R. XII.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL' ORSINO.

**A**NTONIA, you will believe I am not naturally given to despondence, yet I begin to feel a listlessness, and inward disquietude; an impatience that borders very much on it.—I receive no longer any pleasure from things that formerly delighted me;—I reproach fate, and ask heaven why it creates beings to inflict on them anguish and misery!—I know the folly of arraigning the irrecoverable fiat of destiny; but feeling, my dear friend, is prior to reason, and when the heart is corroded, we forget what is wisdom or folly.

Judge if I have not cause to complain; my cruel and inexorable uncle has returned my letter, and my dear fainting mother's, unopened; without deigning to honour me with a few lines to soften my disappointment. Indeed he has written to Lord

Fortesque, but in what a manner! he reproaches him severely for affording me an asylum,—reminds him of the irrevocable vow he took to forget he ever had a sister, and concludes with a peremptory command never to have the subject renewed. Can this be the brother of Lady Mira Belmont!—Can so much humanity, tenderness, and feeling, be allied to such stern insensibility—such——Ah! let me not forget myself, though he has.

Lord Fortesque is gone to London, to see what he can do for me in person. I was very urgent to accompany him, but this he refused, fearing my presence would irritate the Duke more if I appeared before him without permission.

Surely I ought not to repine, when possessed of such a friend as his Lordship;—but still my rebel heart refuses all comfort.—Must I then return to the convent, and witness the insufferable horrors of bigotry and superstition?—Oh miserable thought! but pardon me, dear Antonia, your presence would make every place a paradise. The disappointment rankles at my heart, and changes all things to a sombre hue.

Lady

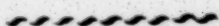
Lady Fortesque, were I not so much indebted to her, I should think the most disgusting of human beings; so trifling, so vain, so frivolous. It is my duty to devote myself to her, and endeavour to enlighten her; yet I know not why I fly her society with the utmost solicitude.—I would fly from myself if there was a possibility.

Farewell,

STOLINA.

*October 30.*





## LETTER XIII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

**H**ENRIETTA, my whole soul is in a complete state of anarchy—I feel as if I had never known misery till now. I am devoured by ten thousand different passions, but love—insatiate love predominates over all, and is mingled with the most tormenting jealousy. This Lexington, this insensible ingrate, loves Theodosia, and too sure the girl returns his passion. Oh, they shall never never be united, till I am laid deep in the earth.

You call this folly. Well, I know it to be so. I ask myself every moment what I wish for, what I want?—but I can find no reply. I live but in the presence of this Lexington; and when he is absent, I cannot say that I exist.

I think the world looks not on me as formerly;—the women are rather cool and distant.

distant. I endeavour to reason with myself against being affected by this behaviour—I ask myself why the coolness of a few insignificant individuals shall disturb me? I laugh, sing, and struggle to shake it off, but in vain—like all other things, it touches my heart. Ah, how miserable a thing is too much sensibility. Why have I not that mediocrity of soul which millions have? Why is my heart the very acme of sentiment? Would to heaven I was as hardened and insensible as all the rest of the world.

Hastings is in town, (at this season of the year) and pursues me like my shadow. What is it the wretch can want? I really believe him to be my evil genius!—Till I saw him, I thought not of gambling; but now, spite of my promise to the Duke, I am in for it again deeply. It is in order to fly from myself, that I engage in play; and am involved in a new species of gambling, of the most fascinating nature—Lottery insurance—it being at present the Irish lottery.

Henrietta, you know not what insurance is, and can have no conception of the feelings of those who are engaged in it. 'Tis every horror comprised in one.—You

rise in the morning—agitated, agonized, trembling with fear—lest those numbers you have insured will not be drawn. You wait impatiently for the moment that will certify or annihilate your hopes;—incapable of any employment, you spend your time in fruitless conjectures, distracting suppositions, and vain illusions. A messenger arrives—you are informed the express is come in, and your favourite number is drawn a prize. The news throws you into extacies—you half believe it, (because you wish it to be so) half dread it is only report—belief predominates. You are wild with delight!—you imagine your ill fortune is past, and the future is an unclouded scene of golden promise. You form ten thousand imaginary schemes—you laugh, feel delighted, and congratulate yourself on selecting that number. In an instant your ideal pleasure is lost—vanished—gone!—the express is indeed arrived, and the number that created all this extravagant joy is—undrawn.

The features are again distorted by despair—the eyes wildly cast to heaven—the hands are clasped, the heart beats, and the brain shoots. Tears chase one another  
down

down the pallid cheeks ;—a tranſient calm, occaſioned by the thoughts of to-morrow, follows.—Evening comes ; you pay your money with eagerneſs—you are taken up with the thoughts of the enſuing day !—you cannot ſleep. Morning arrives, and this day is a repetition of the laſt. Week after week paſſes, without change or variety, and only ſerves to add

“ The bluſh of weakneſs to the bane of woe.”

In ſhort, you barter your peace of mind and property—for what ? For diſtracting doubt, and annihilating confirmation ! Juſt heavens ! is it poſſible *I* ſhould be ſo infatuated ? Alas, 'tis too true ;—I have, I do pay dearly for my folly.

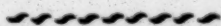
I am impatient for the arrival of my darling Henry ;—I heard from him laſt week.—Adieu, Henny.

Your's,

POLYXENA.

*December 1.*





## LETTER XIV.

LORD HASTINGS

TO SIR HERBERT BEDFORD.

*London.*

I HAVE so much to say to you, that I scarcely know where to begin first. The proud, arrogant, and insensible Dutcheſs of Wolſingham is at length returned to England; and though ſeven years has cooled that deſtructive flame that once conſumed me, yet by heaven, I muſt have my revenge:—this high, this lofty woman muſt —ſhall fall; or everlaſting perdition overtake me.

Yet do not imagine, Herbert, I am ſtill enamoured of her. No, beautiful as an angel ſhe is—but my whole ſoul is now devoted to another; and, as if I was ordained to wrong only the Duke of Wolſingham, this new divinity is alſo related to him.

In

In June last I took a ride in Hyde-Park, not knowing what better to do with myself. A beautiful girl, about seventeen, attracted my notice; she wore mourning, and was attended by a female domestic.—That heart which had so long been a vacuum, was now filled; and if there remained a germe of Polyxena, it was irradiated by this very beautiful girl.—You may believe I followed her home, which I found to be a little perfumer's shop in Air street. Ten minutes after my charmer had disappeared through a private door, I went into the shop, and having thrown away a few guineas in nonsense, I asked the woman whether she let lodgings?—Pleased with a customer so unusually liberal, she was extremely loquacious.—“She did let lodgings, but her house was full at present.” “What was the names of her lodgers, and who were they?” After running over a string of half a dozen, she came to her last lodger. “It was a sweet beautiful young lady, but with a very hard foreign name, and she could not speak it if it was ever so.” “Was the lady a foreigner, then?”—“She believed she was, but did not know for sure; she had come to her  
her

her house from squire Blandford's at Enfield, where her sister (the woman's sister) lived as lady's maid; but she knew nothing of who she was, for she saw no company, and never went out."

By some chance or other I was called into Essex, and staid a couple of days. When I came to town again, I accidentally called in Grosvenor-square, to know when the family were expected in town;—the same divinity darted upon me again—it appeared she had made the same enquiry I had. What she could want with the Wolfinghams surprized me. I asked the porter if he knew her, and was answered with a negative.

From the first moment I saw her, I resolved, if there was a possibility, to get her into my possession—but now it was necessary to make further enquiries who she was. There was but one clue for me, —the woman had mentioned some person of the name of Blandford at Enfield, and I determined to find him out, and enquire there;—accordingly I drove to Enfield, and with some small difficulty found out these people.

I was

I was shewn into a room where there were two females, an old and a young one. Compliments of form having passed, I enquired if a young lady, a foreigner, had not lately left the house?—Miss Blandford (for such I afterwards understood her to be) took upon her to be spokeswoman: “The gentleman, I suppose, means Stolina. Oh, yes sir; she was here near two months—we did every thing to please her, but she gave herself great airs, and was very ungrateful, otherwise she might have staid till her uncle came to England.”

These words occasioned something to flash on my mind, that this uncle was the Duke. “You mean the Duke of Wolsingham, madam?”—“Certainly, sir.”—I had now learnt as much as I could, and after enquiring where I could find her, (merely to keep up the plausibility) which they either did not, or pretended not to know, I took leave, well satisfied with my discovery.

I remembered Wolsingham had formerly a sister who eloped with an Italian who was his valet, and it was pretty clear this little angel was their offspring, and had come to England to seek the patronage  
of



of her uncle.—Having settled the whole business in my own mind, that it must be so (and sure enough I struck the right mark,) I waited on her; announced myself by the name of Fortesque, patched up a fine tale of being the most intimate friend of her uncle, and claimed the privilege of protecting her till his return.

The bait was well hooked—the gudgeon bit, and the next day I sent Harriot (who you know is the fittest in the world for an intrigue) to conduct her to Portland-place, where we staid but two days, and then hurried off to my estate in Scotland, for obvious reasons. In town Harriot could not have supported the character of my wife—a thousand trifles might have betrayed us—and I should not have had her wholly in my power.

I have learnt from herself the particulars of her story; The Duke is a stranger to the knowledge of his having such a relation in the world, and I am determined he shall remain so.

If I cannot gain her by stratagem, do you know I shall be half tempted to play the fool, and marry her:—but still it is absolutely necessary to my peace, for the  
Dutcheſs

Dutchess to be mine ;—she has a daughter that is already thought a beauty—but I hate heavy, lifeless, inanimate charms ; large blue beads for eyes, and a pretty little mouth, that never moves out of a simper ;—so good—so harmless—so insipid—pure milk and water.—Give me the woman with life and animation, whose eyes dart fire,—whose countenance varies with every emotion of the soul ;—who is all life and variety, and who appears not the same thing two minutes—such attraction and novelty could enslave me for ever : but I could as soon gaze on and love a picture, as a languishing beauty.

Thine,

HASTINGS.

*December 27.*

LETTER

  
LETTER XV.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

ILLS croud too thickly on me—fatal illse  
—would to heaven I had never returned  
to it—I should have foreseen to resist play  
was an impossibility. I made a false vow,  
and am punished for it. Forty thousand  
guineas to Hastings! —accursed name!  
Oh, that I had never heard it.

Henrietta, what weak, what short sighted  
~~and~~ mortals we are; our misfortunes are  
brought on by our own indiscretions, and  
yet we accuse and murmur at our fate. It  
is impossible for me to pay the money; I  
cannot beggar my boy, my darling Hen-  
ry;—nor do I think the Duke would give  
so large a sum were I to solicit it.—  
What, what can I do — Settlements, jew-  
els, all that I possess in the world, would  
not produce more than half this sum; the  
curfed lottery too has been my bane. Oh,  
you

you know not what I suffer. The image of this Lexington likewise haunts me incessantly—I think with him I could be content in a cottage in the wilds of Africa—Turn which way I will I meet destruction. I have consented to see Hastings privately this evening; he is urgent for his money. I will throw myself upon his generosity; present to him the real state of my affairs, and condescend to solicit time.—Oh, God! if I should meet with a refusal—that thought is replete with madness. I have a thousand things to say, but have only power to bid you farewell.

## POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.

*January 15.*

LETTER





## LETTER XVI.

THE EARL OF LEXINGTON

TO LADY THEODOSIA MATILDA BELMONT.

AND why was the restriction so positive, Theodosia. “If you love me, Augustus, I conjure you, for the present, let our mutual affection remain an impervious secret.” I consent, dear girl, yet my heart tells me it is wrong—to what good does concealment tend? Suffer me at once to unbosom myself to your father—he loves you most devotedly, and will never thwart your happiness; I have a heavy presentiment hangs over me, of I know not what. Credit me, Theodosia, it will be better to act as I have proposed—think of it; and my man, who waits for your answer, will, I hope, bring me the much-wished for permission.

God bless you, my dear girl.

LETTER

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LETTER XVII.

LADY THEODOSIA MATILDA BELMONT

TO THE EARL OF LEXINGTON.

NO, no, I tell you again, I will not consent. I have a thousand reasons ; and at the present moment it would be highly improper, for my dear father is very ill ; much worse, I fear, than the physician thinks him.

Yesterday he was taken with a lethargic fit, and he has had several since. — This is not all—her Grace, I fear, is also indisposed — she has not stirred out of her dressing-room since last night ; and she will see nobody ; she even refused me admittance.

Farewell ; I have already staid too long from my father.

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LETTER XVIII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

ALL! all is over; I knew not misery till now—Guilt, madness, and despair, are the inmates of this bosom. Some time or another, probably, when my remorse, crimes, and wretchedness, are buried in the cold tomb, the tragical mystery will be unfolded to you; but now my soul is darkness all; and I have only the miserable certainty of knowing I am lost!!!

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LETTER XIX.

LADY THEODOSIA BELMONT

TO THE EARL OF LEXINGTON.

I Was informed you called yesterday—but at what a dreadful moment, just as my dear father had breathed his last. Oh! it was impossible for me to see you; his lethargic fits never left him, and he was scarcely sensible five minutes from first to last—He expired in my arms, and the last word that I heard him articulate was my mother's name, uttered in a tone of tenderness.

My mother is inconsolable; yet methinks there is some other cause besides the loss she has sustained, that afflicts her so dreadfully. She has confined herself to her chamber for several days past, and refused admittance to every body; she has scarce tasted any food; and when Henry arrived (for he was sent for express) her Grace would not see him. This morning, however,



ever, my brother insisted on being admitted.

She looked quite wild, and exceeding ill; but on Henry's throwing himself on his knees, at her feet, and in a pathetic manner offering her consolation, she seemed moved; and throwing her arms round his neck, she hid her face in his bosom, and bursted into tears. This was of infinite service to her, and since then she appears much better.

Adieu.

LETTER

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LETTER XX.

LORD HASTINGS

TO SIR HERBERT BEDFORD.

CROWN me with immortal wreaths,
for I have triumphed. Polyxena, the proud,
the haughty fair, has fallen—Frailty, thy
name is woman; by my foul it was most
glorious.

I think I told you in my last, I was to be
favoured with a private interview; accordingly I was shewn to her Grace's dressing-
room—She was in a loose muslin disha-
bille—she looked most enchantingly in-
viting.

“I have indulged you, my Lord,” said
she, with a most bewitching smile, “yet I
cannot think what could be your motive
for soliciting a private interview. Do you
know I do not think I am acting with the
strictest propriety!” And the fascinating
Cyren smiled again. Oh, woman, woman!
I saw she was labouring to gain me to her
VOL. II. E purpose,

purpose, though what it was I as yet knew not; nevertheless, I was determined to foil with her own weapons, and triumph by her artifice.

“ I wait on your Grace,” said I, with an affected gravity, “ to solicit the small sum that is between us, if it is convenient for you to pay it.” — “ I declare,” said she, with great gaiety, “ you couch your terms quite in the tradesman’s stile; you should have got up, scraped your leg, and made a low bow before the speech.”

In an instant I forgot myself; and in an impassioned manner exclaimed — “ Enchanting vivacity!” — “ I am glad you think so,” replied she, drawing back with the most frigid air — “ Your words and manner contradict each other; why are you glad of it?” — “ First tell me why you spoke with such energy” — “ Because I adore you.”

Well, Bedford, what do you say to this? Don’t you think it was assurance enough? In the same instant I almost regretted my temerity. I expected indignation and banishment; but observe the duplicity of woman.

“ Are

“Are you serious?” asked she, with a short laugh, and a careless air; at the same time laying her snowy hand on my arm. What seducing blandishments! I was fascinated—“By heaven’s I am,” replied I, with energy. — “Why then,” said she, coolly, “I have no doubt of your consenting to oblige me with time; for to own the truth, at the present moment it is impossible for me to pay you.”—“Madam!”—I drew back too. “Oh, man, man!” exclaimed she, “how selfish! how interested! You adore me while it costs you nothing; but requesting a favour is an antidote to love; thus are the whole sex mercenary.”—“Hold!” interrupted I, “you shall not find me mercenary; you have it in your own power to cancel the whole debt; and five and forty thousand pounds, madam, is not a bagatelle.”

She sighed at the name of the sum. “It is in my power to cancel the whole do you say? How, in what manner?”—“I am content to be paid another way.” She started; and her cheeks were vermillioned with indignation. “Not but what the money!” continued I, with the utmost *sang froid*, “would be very acceptable.”

She looked at me with an endeavour to penetrate my very soul. — “ Indeed, indeed, Hastings,” said she, plaintively, “ I cannot pay you ; I have not more than fifty guineas in the world, and those I borrowed this morning of Theodosia.”

“ Compromise the matter then at once,” replied I, putting my arm round her waist, and drawing her towards me, for we both sat on the sofa. “ How ?” replied she. I replied, only by pressing the beautiful lips that vented the interrogation. — “ And will you oblige me with time, Hastings ?”

I perceived the movements of her very soul. She thought, by granting me trifling favours, to conquer. But a woman never exposes herself to so much danger as when she trifles with a lover. I watched the movements of her passion ; saw when “ occasion smiled on me, and seized the golden glorious opportunity.” Oh, it was a god-like triumph. The great and beautiful Polyxena was all my own.

HASTINGS.

LETTER

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LETTER XXI.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

ALL, all is over! My Lord Fortesque is returned, my uncle is no more, and his last words were a command on the Dutchess not to acknowledge me. How peculiarly severe my fate is, dearest Antonia, yet I will not reflect on the dead. I shall return to you, my friend; I will reconcile myself to the gloom of a convent. Your tenderness will effect wonders; and I am sure you will exert it all to console and reconcile me.

I will sometimes ramble to the little cot that was once my dear departed mother's; and, as I view the scenes of my infantine joys, I will forget my recent sorrows and disappointments. Oh, Antonia! at present they lay heavy, very heavy, at my heart.

Lord Fortesque thinks me joking, when I talk of returning to Italy—he laughs, and tells me, he is my guardian, and he will never part with me but to a husband! I thank him, but am resolute in my determination. My spirit will not brook obligation from strangers; and, besides, I dislike her ladyship. She and the waiting-woman quarrelled the other day, and the domestic threw out broad hints of her not being the wife of Lord Fortesque. I was stunned, and am yet full of doubts and perplexities. I think it strange also that a woman of her rank, who scarce exists out of the metropolis, should pass a long dreary winter, in a dull part of Scotland.

This is something mysterious, and it disturbs me. I am interrupted for the present. Adieu.

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### IN CONTINUATION.

IT is an age, my friend, since I began this letter. Oh, Antonia! my sufferings multiply most rapidly; I am a prisoner, confined,

fined, insulted, and exposed to the society of two of the basest of human beings who disgrace their sex. This woman, this wretch, who was passed on me for Lady Fortesque, is one of those loose creatures we sometimes read of. She and her waiting woman are my guards—I dare not stir—I neither eat, drink, or sleep; I am in continual dread and fear. This Lord, this vile wretch, has offered me a settlement to become his mistress. Oh, my God, that I should live to bear such indignities! Why, why, did I survive my beloved mother. Oh! that one small space of earth had received us together; what sufferings had I been spared—Heaven knows, if my letters are suffered to be forwarded; but as he is certain I have but one friend in the whole universe, and that friend a pensioner in a convent, I suppose he will have no fears on the score of my claiming assistance.

Ha! a thought strikes me; I will address the Dutchess of Wolfingham. I have every thing to gain, and nothing to lose. She is at a villa in Surry, since the death of her Lord; this I learnt from my betrayer, whose name I find is Hastings, and not Fortesque.



Farewell, dearest friend; in thy pious  
orisons, think of thy ill-fated friend, and  
breathe a prayer for a more smiling fate  
to attend thy

STOLINA

LETTER

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L E T T E R X X I I .

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM.

FORGIVE, madam, the sollicitations of the most wretched and unfortunate of beings. Were my sorrows less I would not intrude on you to forego your promise to my late uncle, in favour of me. You are no doubt acquainted with my name and affinity to your Grace, yet I claim no distinction; I entreat you only to exert yourself so much as to save me from destruction; free me from imprisonment; compel my Lord Hastings to give me up; and I will return to my convent with a heart filled with your kindness; and my gratitude, adoration, and prayers, shall be eternally your's.

I have heard, madam, that you have celestial beauty; and my heart persuades me you have equal goodness. Save me then, most irresistible of women; and may

every blessing, peace, happiness, and joys, be eternally your's.

I suppose it is superfluous to add, I am at my Lord Hastings' castle, in Scotland; you are already acquainted with that, and with the name of the wretched

STOLINA LUCHESINI.

LETTER

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L E T T E R   XXIII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO STOLINA LUCHESINI.

**I** Am at a loss, madam, to answer the letter with which you have favoured me; yet, as your distress seems most poignant, and you solicit redress from me, I hazard a few lines to demand an explanation — point out to me the manner in which I can assist you, and you shall not find me backward.

Indeed I am not conscious of having given any promise to any person, neither do I comprehend who you mean by your late uncle. I am equally unacquainted with the relationship that stands between us, and a total stranger to your name, though you seem as if I knew it well.

The conclusions then that I have formed is, that you have been betrayed into the power of my Lord Hastings, the greatest enemy of our sex. It is well you mentioned



oned being at his seat in Scotland, otherwise  
I should not have had the power of address-  
ing you, and offering you the service and  
assistance of your

Humble servant,

POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.

*Walton-upon-Thames,*

*May 25.*

LETTER

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LETTER XXIV.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

DO not humble, confuse, and mortify me, by praises that my weak heart has no pretensions to ; indeed, I feel no vanity in reading what I know I cannot deserve. I am become a mere machine ; I make no longer any stand against misfortune — every day's occurrence bows me to the ground. I grow careless of even seeking for consolation ; and so far from attempting to cultivate an interest with any thing or person, I scarce know what happens.

Sometimes I return to the old habit of arguing with myself ; but what does it avail ? All that I endeavour to combine in theory is destroyed in practice. I exclaim it is folly all ; I withdraw into myself, sick of the drama, and determine no longer to oppose my fate, but to yield obedience to
whatever

whatever the mysterious impulses impose. What is it you ask? The particulars of my destruction and misery. Oh, do not impose a task on me that would again subject me to all the wild tempestuous dominion of the most tremendous passions, and recall the most fatal and foul-harrowing recollections. Henrietta, you know not what you demand—spare, spare, your friend. I do assure you, my brain has been on fire; all the powers that strengthen and feed the lamp of life, have been suspended; and I was half tempted to cut short the thread of my misery; but my boy, my darling Henry, presented himself like a guardian angel, and saved me an augmentation of crimes.

There are people, Henrietta, who supposing I grieve for my husband, endeavour to console me in the old key of whining morality, and would, with an argument new, set a pulse; and others destroy me by their impertinent condolence. Nothing can be more humiliating than the alms of pity, the world, in its tender mercy, so liberally bestows. Its breath

——— “ is perfume, and its words
“ Sweet blossoms, that contain a venom'd sting ;
“ Kinder is hatred, in its honest garb,
“ Than stinging Pity in her meek-ey'd mask.”

Oh! that I could fly to the most impenthrable recesses of the most savage wilderness, rather than be condemned to bear this mockery of kindness. I take medicine in absolute self-defence, to avoid contending with the officious fools about me ; but can medicine eradicate deep rooted maladies of the heart? No ; and I really think my case is aggravated by all this bustle and parade.

I see Lexington daily ; he rides down generally to dinner ; Henry adores him ; but not with the energy his distracted mother does. Tell me, do you think there is any hope ; do you believe it possible by any means to make this man mine? Oh, no ; Theodosia possesses him wholly. I drag my thoughts from the subject ; I am not capable to dwell on it, for madness lays that way.

A fortnight ago I received a strange, unaccountable letter from Scotland, written by some distressed girl in the custody of the vilest

vilest reptile that crawls the earth—I mean Hastings. Every line spoke despair; but how she came to address me is the enigma.

Good God! how many wretched beings there are—to me 'tis amazing that we hear not more frequently of suicide. I cannot think how people can live and suffer as they do. To me the whole world “is flat, stale, and unprofitable.” I am quite weary of it.

“Methinks each step I take some fiend,

“With hideous jaws, stands ready to devour me.

— — — — —

“For peace and I are now for ever parted,

“And horrors grow each moment more familiar.”

Adieu! Henny, think of me sometimes, and commiserate the wretch whom remorse, and a hopeless passion, contributes hourly to annihilate.

POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.

June 10.

LETTER

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LETTER XXV.

LORD HASTINGS

TO SIR HERBERT BEDFORD.

**D**AMNATION! if a man was to study plotting the whole of his life—if he was to make an absolute science of it; yet he would be out-done by a mere girl. I know not the reason, but I absolutely believe a woman may hold fifty Argus's in defiance. This little witch has had ingenuity enough to write to the Dutchess; and the good lady has condescended to answer her-letter; which answer, by the meerest chance in the world, came into my possession. I encountered the fellow who brings the letters from the post town, and took them from him myself—looking at each direction, I found one for Stolina, written in an English hand writing, and one I believe I had seen before; the post-mark was not intelligible, so I thought I would make free with the seal. It was from Polyxena, and  
her

her divinityship made somewhat free with your humble servant.

Well! well! she has my permission to do so. But now, what to do with this spirited little devil in question. Would you believe I have offered to marry her, and have met with a downright positive refusal—no female finessing—but that she never could reconcile herself to any being so familiar with duplicity—that she was not certain but I was already married—more than once probably; that she hated and detested me—and that she would be content to beg her bread all round the world, rather than unite herself to a being so depraved, and enjoy the utmost splendour.

What do you think? Is not this pretty plain, and damned saucy? but the proud gipsy may yet supplicate, even on her knees, what she refuses with so much hauteur. May I perish if she passes me. But she must be removed, or the emissaries of the confounded Dutchess may elude my vigilance; for this purpose I shall bring her up to town, and give her in charge to mother ..... and if I effect not my purpose under her auspices, I should wonder at it.

Do

Do me the favour to call in Portland Place, and inform my people, I shall be in town this day sen'night.

I am, &c.

HASTINGS.

*June*

LETTER



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LETTER XXVI.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

I Address myself to you, Antonia, but the transcript of my wretched soul will never reach your hands:—I know it; but it is a consolation to me to pour out my sorrows on paper, and invoke the name of my dear friend.—Oh how the proud spirit of thy Stolina is humbled!—how wretched, how weary, how distressed she is;—still in possession of this vile man; still a prisoner, and denied air, liberty and peace:—Ah I fear the fugitive will never return to me again!—I now in reality despond, for I am, I know not where; but believe in London.

We were hurried from the castle all on a sudden, our journey lasted a week, and when I arrived, which was night, I was taken in the chariot by Lord Hastings, to the house of an old lady, whom he told me was his aunt;—but I doubt every thing
he

he says.—I know not his reason for this removal—I fear every thing, and have no hope.

The lady of the house, where I am, is officiously polite ; but her civility is disgusting :—I asked yesterday to take a walk, as I found my health materially injured by the confinement I had sustained ; but my request was refused—I demanded haughtily the reason ; and Mrs. Mortimer, for so the woman is called, only replied, “when I chose to become my Lady Hastings, I might walk, ride, or do what I pleased.”

Oh, never, never will I sacrifice every liberty of soul for temporary enjoyment ! —Marry Hastings!—Merciful God, heap on me every accumulation of horrors ; but suffer not this to be effected :—there is no misery I would not sustain with resignation, save uniting myself to this man, and that I could not—would not survive.

I know not the event of the letter I addressed to the Dutchess of Wolsingham ;—Heaven knows if she ever received it, too true it is, I never had any answer!—Oh God, aid me with patience ; and as it is thy will to chastize thy servant, bestow on her fortitude, to bear with humility and resignation,

resignation, the effects of thy divine pleasure.

I see no female domestic about this house that I could offer a bribe to afford me some assistance. At meals, men servants attend, at night, Mrs. Mortimer follows me to my chamber; and one day I confined myself, with hopes of some maid-servant attending me; but no, Mrs. Mortimer was my attendant, and so disgusted was I, that I shall never sham illness again.

There are two shewy young women, the Miss Mortimers; Rosina, the youngest, is really very lovely, but I feel no propensity to cultivate an interest with either of them.—Lord Hastings is below, and I am summoned to attend him, I dare not refuse.

Dear Antonia, Pity your unfortunate

STOLINA.

August 6.

LETTER

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LETTER. XXVII.

LADY THEODOSIA BELMONT

TO MISS MONTACUTE.

**I** Accept your sympathy, dear Cecilia, for in truth I am most wretched;—Lexington has requested permission of my mother to address me, and has received a peremptory refusal.—She has treated me unkindly too, and upbraided me in the harshest manner for encouraging him:—I demanded mildly what objection she had to him? Her answer was, she had other views:—the Duke's affairs were greatly deranged at his death, that she had no fortune to give me, it must all go to Henry to support his rank, and even then, he would be comparatively poor:—she meant, he should marry an heiress, and asked, if Miss Montacute meant to perform her promise, and spend the winter in town with us?—I answered only with tears; the dearest wish of my heart had been too recently annihilated, to  
suffer



suffer my thoughts to wander to any thing else:—she called me a poor whining baby, and commanded me from her presence.

Ah, how greatly is she altered in a short space of time!—Once she was all humanity, compassion, and feeling;—but now she is ferocious, insensible, and overwhelming.—Oh had my dear, my worshiped father known what his darling Theodosia was to sustain, I am sure he would never have left me to a state of dependance!—Henry indeed is very kind; but he loves his mother better than he does me.—Lexington, since the ill treatment he received from the Dutchess, has not visited at our house, and I am half heart-broken.

Oh Cecilia, may you ever be a stranger to this destructive passion that destroys your friend.—Farewell, in all situations I can never fail to be,

Sincerely and affectionately

Your's

T. M. BELMONT.

*London,  
September 9.*

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LETTER XXVIII.

THE EARL OF LEXINGTON

TO LADY THEODOSIA MATILDA BELMONT.

YOU have assured me, your love for me exceeded every thing in the world. Now, then, Theodosia, is the time to prove the truth of your assertion. The Dutchess refuses to consent to our union. I know her motive, and despise it.

You, dear angelic girl, are doomed to be the victim of a mother who is unworthy of you. Consent to free yourself from her tyranny—accept the hand and heart that is devotedly your's. I know your gentleness, my lov'd Theodosia, and greatly fear you have not courage and resolution to act contrary to the commands of this fastidious woman.

Hear then, what I have to propose.—Consent to become my wife—put it beyond the power of fate to separate us—and I swear most solemnly to you to retain it an

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inviolable secret, till you yourself shall reveal it. A clergyman on whom I can depend will unite us.—Consent, then, most beloved of women, and meet me at eleven to-morrow, No. ** Henrietta-street, Cavendish-square.

Heaven bless you. Believe, while life remains, I shall be devotedly

Your's,

LEXINGTON.

September 15.

LETTER

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LETTER XXIX.

THE COUNTESS OF LEXINGTON

TO HER HUSBAND.

AH! dearest Augustus, what have I done! Since yesterday I have been in continual disquietude ;—every eye seems as if it would penetrate my secret. Every time my mother goes to speak to me, I fear she is about to reproach me with my duplicity.

Henry's vivacity tires and oppresses me. I think of you, and even then I am miserable with dread of your despising a woman so readily won.—Ah, let love palliate my weakness :

“ In truth, I am too fond,  
“ And therefore thou may'st think my conduct  
“ light ;  
“ But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
“ Than those who have more cunning to be  
“ strange.”



Pray visit at our house as formerly. I cannot exist without seeing you. I shall expect you this evening.

Adieu.

*September 17.*

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LETTER XXX.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

I Have received an addition to my family, Henrietta, and in the strangest way imaginable. Theodosia and myself had been to Lady Villiers's rout last night, and had returned home about an hour, when a more than usual loud knock rung the house, and somewhat deranged my nervous system; as for Madame Sentimental, she nearly fainted.

A very short pause followed, when the drawing-room door was thrown open, and Henry entered, bearing in his arms a woman to all appearance dead!—He laid her on the sofa, and catching my hand in a wild manner, exclaimed, “Save her! save her!” The poor fellow was breathless, rang the bell with violence, stalked about the room, and at length threw him-

self on his knees by the side of the insensible stranger!

By this time the housekeeper and servants had assembled, and restoratives being administered, to recover the object of Henry's solicitude, my curiosity was strangely excited about this stranger.— Though insensible, her face was beautiful as Venus's—her arms and bosom were alabaster; she had no covering on her neck, nor any gloves. Her dress, which was of very fine muslin, was wretchedly torn and dirtied, as if she had fallen in the street; her head was likewise uncovered, and her beautiful pale auburn hair fell to her waist, and ornamented her face and bosom with a profusion of ringlets.

Never did I see any thing so beautiful, so lovely, or so interesting! My impatience to know who she was, was extreme. Under a pretence that the women could not assist her while Henry stood by, I drew him away, and began my interrogations. "Who was the lady?" "He did not know." This I did not believe, for I began to conjecture her some *chère amie* of his. "Where did he bring her from?" "From the cold earth—from the street—
where

where she had fallen, where she must have perished?" There was something wild and disordered in his manner, and casting my eyes on him, I perceived his cloaths to be spotted with blood. I gave a faint shriek! At that moment the fair stranger, who had begun to revive, uttered some incoherent expression. Henry darted from me, and was once more on his knees at her side.

She had raised herself up, and was talking in a wild disturbed manner to Theodosia, whose hand she clasped between her two. I drew near. "Are you not my dear Antonia?" said she to my daughter. "Now that I am once again with you, I am free from danger; that wicked monster cannot get me here." Then turning her eyes towards Henry, she uttered a shriek that pierced my very soul:—"Save save me! He is here again! Shield me from that monster Hastings!"

I sunk in my seat. "Another victim of that base wretch!" sighed I.—She had sunk into strong convulsions. "I shall lose her!—she will die!" exclaimed Henry, starting up. "Fly, fly," continued he, to the wondering and frightened domesticks, "get a physician—a hundred—so as they

but save her." I ordered her to be carried up stairs, and Theodosia attended to see her undressed, and put to bed.

The blood on Henry's cloaths had alarmed me, and I enquired the cause of it. "I believe I have a slight wound," said he, carelessly, "but 'tis a mere nothing."—"A wound!—for heaven's sake where?" He took off his coat, and his left arm had been slightly wounded by a sword; the sleeve of the shirt had clogged to the incision, and somewhat stopped the bleeding—but I was sufficiently alarmed, and sent a messenger immediately for Dr. H. In the mean time, Mr. W. had arrived, to see our fair sufferer, whom he pronounced not any way in danger. "The agitation of her mind had annihilated her strength and spirits, and a slight fever might be the effect, but nothing more."

The surgeon soon after arrived, and a little clean lint and a bandage was all he administered to Henry's arm—in fact, it was but a slight scratch. A composing cordial was given to our fair invalid above, who sunk into a calm repose. Leaving Monson to sit up with her, we returned to the drawing-room to supper, after which

Henry

Henry satisfied our curiosity, by an account of this adventure.

“ You left me (said he) at the whist-table in Lady Villiers’s drawing-room. The game was critical, and interested us very much—I and Lexington were partners. Apparently the game was our’s to all intents and purposes, when on a sudden, by some chance, I know not what, we lost it. I arose somewhat chagrined, for I had played critically just. I made my bow to Lady Villiers, and departed.

“ I found the carriage had not returned for me. Augustus would have set me down, but it was a fine clear night, and I walked on, ruminating on the game we had lost. In Albermarle-street, I was roused from my reverie by a most piercing shriek!—it struck to my very soul. It was followed by another, and another! and then the voice appeared to be stifled. I knocked without hesitation at the house from whence it proceeded.—I asked of the man for his mistress.—“ She was engaged,” he said, in a confused manner. I knew what sort of a house I had entered, and without any ceremony rushed up stairs to the drawing-room. The door was

locked, but with one effort I burst it open. Ah, my dear mother, what a sight presented itself!—the lovely girl who is above was on the floor—convulsed, struggling, and nearly spent, with a vile monster, unworthy of the name of man!

“Upon my entrance, he turned fiercely round, and bid me begone.—“Oh, no, no, no!” cried she, starting up, finding herself at liberty, “for the sake of heaven do not leave me!—stay—save—protect me.” At that instant an old beldam entered from another apartment, and the unfortunate girl rushed out of the room.—“She will make her escape!” shrieked the woman, and they both started towards the door;—but I placed my back resolutely against it, scarcely knowing whether I did right or wrong.

“Boy, wretch,” exclaimed the vile seducer, “away, or I will tread you beneath my feet.” I smiled contemptuously. he flew to the fire-place, and taking a sword from the chimney-piece, actually made a thrust at me. I parried it off, and received a slight wound in my arm. In the struggle the woman got the door open, and called loudly to the servants for Stolina,
but

but she was gone, and I joined the rest in pursuit of her.

“In Oxford-street she was found, laying on the earth in strong convulsions, and surrounded by watchmen and a few stragglers. I took her in my arms, and offered five guineas to the first man who got me a chair, for there was not a hack on the stand.—By this time the other party came up, all but the wretch, who I understand is Lord Hastings; but he, I suppose, was afraid to appear. The old woman said it was her daughter, and demanded her from me. I refused to give her up—she began to make a great noise, and would have torn the insensible girl from me; but I desired she would listen to what I was going to say. This she would not consent to—but the croud cried, “hear the gentleman,” and she was forced to do so.

“I am a stranger (said I) to you. I passed your house, which is a reputed bad one; I was alarmed by a violent shrieking, and rushed in just time enough to save this poor girl from ruin. If in the morning you will prove to me she is your daughter, you shall have her resigned to you. I am the Duke of Wolfingham, and shall take her

her to my mother's house in Grosvenor-square."

"The watchman, who I suspect was in her pay, and had remained therefore silent, no sooner heard my name, than he insisted on the woman's being gone; and the chair arriving, I put the still insensible Stolina in it, and have brought her to you, Madam, to act hereafter as you think proper."

Stolina! the name struck me; it must be the same unfortunate girl that wrote me a letter from Scotland, which excited in me so much curiosity and surprize.

Pardon me, Henrietta, for quitting you so abruptly, but I am summoned to the apartment of our invalid.

Adieu,

P. WOLSINGHAM.

October 30.

LETTER

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LETTER XXXI.

THE DUKE OF WOLSKINGHAM

TO THE EARL OF LEXINGTON.

**W**HAT the devil, Augustus, took you out of town so malapropos ; I do not know what business you can have at Windsor ; and if I can read physiognomy, Theodosia thinks so too ; I called yesterday morning in Brook Street, and was proceeding up to your study post haste, to ease myself of a world of news that I had to impart, when the fellow stopped me, and in a voice, that methought croaked like a raven's, informed me, you had left town.

“ Aye ! how the devil, left town—for what purpose ? Where is he gone to ? ”—

“ Why, please your Grace, Sir Harry Saville took my Lord down to Windsor.”

“ What to do there ? ” — “ I think I heard De Valery say, that Sir Henry was going to be married, and my Lord was to  
stand

stand as father." The devil father them all, muttered I, as I walked away.

Well, my Lord, I waited patiently till this morning, thinking you would return; but, meeting Maynard, he told me he saw you both go off, and you would not return till Monday. Till Monday!—What, keep all I have to impart three days—impossible! So I have taken up my pen to ease my overloaded stomach. In a few words, then, I am desperately in love with an angelic little creature that Fortune made me the instrument of snatching from the gripe of a rude ravisher.

The poor little thing is very ill, and the doctors make a great fuss; but I have a very powerful *presentiment*, that whispers, she will live; and, "by God, she shall not die."

"Monsieur," said I, to one of these sons of Galen, "I conjure you to pass off no tricks; if Stolina is well by this day week, you shall have a hundred guineas; and for every day longer I shall take off ten."—The doctor laughed; but I warrant he will profit by my hint.

May I perish, Lexington, if ever you saw such a divinity as this girl. If Theodora's

dofia's blue eyes has not already captured your heart, Stolina's black one's will — but she is mine by every law of chivalry; and you shall pistol me ere you get her.

Farewell,

WOLSINGHAM.

*November 2.*

LETTER





## LETTER XXXII.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL' ORSINO.

DEAREST Antonia, what is happiness, peace, or joy—chimeras that do not exist! —I have gained that situation I had so long, and so ardently prayed for; I am protected by the Dutches of Wolfingham, reside with her, am acknowledged her niece; treated with tenderness, attention, and kindness; yet am miserable. I would return to our convent; I would seek, in the bosom of solitude and friendship, that peace which once was mine; but I have not the resolution—busy active memory would follow me there, and misery would still be mine—I cannot quit this world, this delusive fascinating world, I am bound to it by adamantine chains—I struggle to free myself, but struggle in vain. I endeavour to excuse myself in my own opinion, by fancy-  
ing

ing gratitude for this amiable family keeps me here. What folly to attempt at deceiving one's self, yet, yet, I cannot conquer it.

It is months since I last wrote to you ; and as you feel, I am convinced, an interest for what concerns me, I will endeavour to trace the occurrences that has transpired since.—I think I told you in my last I had arrived in London, and was placed in the house of Mrs. Mordant, where I was a kind of a state prisoner, and where Lord Hastings visited occasionally ; at which times I was compelled to receive him alone in the drawing room ; at others, I was permitted to keep my own apartment. Near a month or more had elapsed, to me, as you may believe, the most wretched of my life, when, one evening, my Lord paid his customary visit. My spirits were unusually low ; I believe I had been crying ; I know I was very wretched, and he upbraided me with my despondence.

“ Stolina,” said he, “ why do I see you give way to such despair ? What have you to complain of ? ” — “ Of much, my Lord ; am I not deprived of my liberty, kept from my friends—unknown to the world ; de-  
pendant

pendant on a man whom I cannot esteem ; and protected by a woman whose character I suspect ; am I not justly miserable and despondent ?”

“ Your liberty, madam, you can procure to-morrow, if it pleases you — the friends you are kept from are not willing to acknowledge you. The world (sneeringly) has not so much respect for intrinsic merit, as to acknowledge it, unless it has stronger claims ; and though you are too proud to be dependant on me, (to use your own term) I still offer you my hand and fortune, and will be content to be dependant on you.”

“ This is an old theme, my Lord,” answered I, with disgust ; “ you have had my sentiments often on it, and I am amazed you can stoop to solicit the hand of a woman who hates and detests you.”

“ These are strong expressions, Stolina ; I could wish you, for your own sake, to be more moderate ; you may make me desperate also ; I have hitherto behaved to you in the most honourable manner ; my offers are still so, but this is the last time I will bear insult ; and you must now finally tell me your determination—Will you become  
my

my wife."—"Never, never," replied I, firmly.—"Then, by God, you shall be something worse:" and with these words he flung out of the room; and I saw him no more for three days. On the fourth evening, Mrs. Mordant came to fetch me to the drawing room—I followed her with the same degree of despondent resignation as ever; at the door she left me as usual. Lord Hastings I found in high spirits; he swore he had drank three bottles of burgundy; and it was evident he was strongly intoxicated—Every limb of me trembled; he asked me to play, and sing him a song; I dared not refuse; I sat down to the piano, and played, but had neither power nor inclination to sing—when I had done, he called me an angel, and rudely snatched a kiss—I pushed him from me with all my strength, and ran to the door, but found it locked. My agitation was indescribable; I absolutely panted for breath.

"Come, come, my little charmer," said he, dragging me towards him, "give yourself no trouble, your fate is sealed; this night you shall bless these arms, and to morrow, if you supplicate me properly,  
may



I may condescend to make you Lady Hastings."

Oh! Antonia, my agonies are not to be depicted. I tore from him like a poor bird, that flutters round his cage, sought release from every corner of the room—The monster laughed, and once more pulled me towards the sofa. I sunk on my knees to him; I used every endeavour to soften him, but he has a heart of stone—Tears, prayers, and shrieks, were efforts. When, at the moment my ruin appeared inevitable, the door burst open, and an angel rushed in and saved me.

I knew very little of what afterwards followed.—I recollect falling down stairs, opening the street-door, and running a considerable distance:—At length my strength forsook me—I fell, and my senses vanished!—When I awoke, I found myself in an elegant bed, and some one holding one of my hands; I raised myself a little, and beheld a very beautiful young woman sitting by the bed-side.

"Where am I," asked I anxiously, "where you will be safe from further persecution," replied she tenderly, "be under no apprehensions I conjure you—tell me how  
you

you feel yourself, and if there is any thing, or person that you wish for."—"Go Monson," continued she, to an attendant, "and inform my mother, the lady is sensible."—I essayed to thank her, but a faintness again overcame me, and I sunk on my pillow.—When I revived, I found the party encreased by a gentleman, who proved to be the doctor;—and a most charming—a most heavenly woman, apparently about seven and twenty. My eyes were fixed on her, I think I had never seen any thing half so lovely.—She seated herself on the bed and took my hand. "You must make yourself perfectly easy, my sweet girl," said she, "do not flutter yourself, you are under my protection, and have nothing to fear." "And to whom am I thus obliged?" demanded I faintly—she smiled.—"Talk not, my love, of being obliged, you once solicited my care, and I am now happy to grant it you—you must not talk, your physician will not allow of it;—but to put you at ease, I am the person whom you wrote to from Scotland."—"The Dutchess of Wolfingham!" cried I, in transports, "Hush, hush," said she, "I impose absolute silence, we shall

shall have time enough hereafter to talk over every thing."—"Theodosia," continued she, to the young lady I had first seen—"I leave you to your patient," she then bid me adieu, and retired with the doctor.

Not to tire you my dear friend, at the expiration of the week, I removed to the Dutchess's dressing-room, where I was to take tea, and be introduced to her son—The moment he entered, my heart sprang to greet him—it was my deliverer,—and though my agitation was too extreme to have noticed him that evening; yet my heart intuitively acknowledged him immediately.

I fear the thanks I tendered him were very inadequate to the gratitude I felt, or the service he had rendered me, but my feelings were too great for utterance.—On this evening a general eclaireissement took place—I related every occurrence of my life—and the Dutchess nobly acknowledged my relationship, without any hesitation.—My suspicions were very just—Lord Hastings had never given my papers to the Duke; nor did his Grace ever know there existed such a being as myself.—The Dutchess

Dutchess assured me she answered my letter,—but as I never received it, that vile man must have intercepted it.

I was soon well enough to reach the drawing-room, where I was introduced to the friends of the Dutchess, and in particular to the Earl of Lexington, who is here continually, and who, if I mistake not, is a great favourite in this family :—and now I will give you a small description of Lady Theodosia and the Duke.

The former, is near nineteen,—and most beautifully made, with the finest soft blue eyes and flaxen hair in the world,—her figure is a faithful index of her disposition. —No tempestuous passions ever ruffles that breast—that seems the placid seat of calm content ;—ever smiling,—easy,—unchanged, and appears to possess neither wishes or fears.—Happy, enviable mortal,—whose life must be one unclouded ray of sun-shine !

The Duke, is all ardour and impetuosity, volatile, lively, gay, and enchanting.—Ah, Antonia, I feel already too lively an interest for this very amiable young man ; but a hint from the Dutchess has made me truly miserable !

The



The mother and daughter had presented me with some trinkets, the Duke, insisted that his dear Coz, for so he always calls me, should accept something from him also, and accordingly, a few days afterwards he brought me his picture, enriched with very large brilliants, set transparent.—“Mademoiselle Coz,” said he, in his usual droll manner, “I have brought you a little foolish affair, which if you will honour me by wearing, I shall with myself monstrously in its place.”

Lady Theodosia smiled, and the Dutchess said, “Come here rattle-pate, and show me what it is.”—“No,” replied he, “I will not open the case, till Stolina promises to wear it.”—“Well, well, I will promise for her,” said she; “so let us see what your taste has produced.” When he displayed it, I thought she looked serious.

“Oh, dear, it is very beautiful, and astonishingly like my brother,” said Lady Theodosia. Pleasure kept me dumb; the Dutchess was also silent. “Well, ma’am,” said his Grace, “you do not tell me whether you like it or not.”—“It is well painted, and neatly set,” answered she—“I have promised for Stolina; so she must  
accept

accept the bauble ; but I do not know what Miss Montacute will say."

" She! what has she to say," exclaimed the Duke, somewhat angry. The Dutchess is a great politician. — " My dear Henry," said she, with a forced smile, " you deserve a little punishment, for displaying so much vanity in your gift. Self-love is fond of portraits ; but come, present it to Stolina." — " Miss Montacute," ah, this is a spectre that has haunted me ever since ; the name resounds everlastingly in my ears. Henry is engaged surely to this Miss Montacute, and I am doomed still to eternal misery—This portrait is my greatest happiness ; I talk to it, I weep over it, and think when Miss Montacute is the happy wife of the too amiable original, this miniature is all that will be left the ill-fated Stolina. A thousand times I have been going to ask Lady Theodosia about this fortunate woman, but have not courage. Yesterday, her Ladyship received a letter, and when she looked at the superscription, said, " It is from Cecilia ;" and after reading it she told the Dutchess, " Miss Montacute presented her respects." — " Oh!

that name ! it sent a death-like chill to my heart.

I have the same establishment Lady Theodora has—two men servants, a woman, and a sedan chair. But, ah, my friend, I find grandeur does not produce happiness. I am called by my lovely cousin, and must attend him. Adieu, dear friend ; believe me, unalterably,

Your's,

STOLINA LUCHESINI.

*December 3.*

LETTER

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LETTER XXXIII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

HOW strange and intricate are the ways of Providence. This Stolina, this beautiful unfortunate, proves to be the daughter of Lady Mira Belmont, whom you recollect eloped with her brother's valet; who, in fact, was a person of high rank, and who had romantically assumed that disguise, and attended the Duke to England.—This girl has strong claims on my heart; in the first place, she stands as it were alone in the world, without a friend or relative, except myself. Secondly, she is the child of misfortune—and probably her uncle would have made some provision for her, had not the malice of her fate, and the villainy of Hastings, prevented it. Thus circumstanced, I only do my duty in protecting her, yet I greatly fear she will occasion me many days of
G 2 wretchedness.

wretchedness. My fatal propensity for cards, seems absolutely interwoven with my existence, vain are my endeavours to struggle against the stream. I could sooner cease to exist than cease to play, and my ill fortune is equal to my ardour. Our income is very much reduced; the trades people bore one to death; and the only thing that remains is to persuade Henry to a union with Cecilia Montacute, who is heiress to fifteen thousand a year. This I fear, however, will be a most arduous task, for it is too evident he is enamoured of this little Italian divinity. I hope, however, she will not return his passion—Absurd idea! Can any one see my Henry, and not adore him! — Ah, Henrietta, I sicken at the thoughts of what's to come! I am interrupted — — — — —
— — — I should have informed you of the conversation which took place between me and Henry the morning after his bringing home Stolina. The whole night I had been tormenting myself how to prevent a duel taking place, between Hastings and my son. It appeared to me next to an impossibility that Henry would not receive a challenge; and after revolving in my mind
ten

ten thousand schemes, I fixed on the following—

“ My dear boy,” said I, at breakfast, to him, “ I am going to ask a favour of you ; will you promise to grant it ? ” and I smiled and looked, as if the favour was a mere bagatelle—“ Can you think, my dear mother,” replied he, “ that I can refuse you any thing ? ”—“ Why I don’t know,” said I, carelessly ; “ but you will promise to grant me this.”—“ Most undoubtedly.”—“ Upon your honor”—“ Upon my soul ! ”

Here was manifested all the energy that distinguishes him. “ I am perfectly satisfied, my son,” said I, embracing him ; “ my request is then, that you will never accept nor give Lord Hastings a challenge.” He looked chagrined ; but I exclaimed, “ Henry, my darling son, you have given me a solemn promise, and I am sure you will never violate it.” This was spoken in a proper tone, and had the desired effect—He pressed my hand to his lips, and bowed. This was a material point adjusted, and took a great load from my heart ; but Lord Hastings has not attempted to
G 3 call

call my son out; nevertheless, he has addressed me.

On this letter I shall make no comments; that indignation, which was my peculiar characteristic, is totally annihilated—my lofty spirit is humbled; I have no longer any thing to be proud of; and this letter but too powerfully reminds me of this dreadful truth. The contents ran thus:

“ MADAM,

“ YOU have protected and avowed for your relation a very charming girl, to whom my heart is very fervently devoted—You are not now to learn, madam, that when my heart is set on the accomplishment of any favourite scheme, no barriers can deter me from success—allow me then to say, that I am resolved to have this Stolina, though the whole universe should combine to keep her from me—and having thus avowed my sentiments, I am solicitous to know on which side you will enlist, whether in this affair are we friends or foes—whether in the face of the world you will

will give her to me, as Lady Hastings, or endeavour to shield her from me. If, madam, you consent to become my friend, I will relinquish all the money which is due to me, and add to it an equal sum in ready cash—You know me to be in certain points honourable. Those favours you have granted, and I have received, another man would have proudly boasted of. I have been more discreet, and your fate now rests on yourself—make your terms, madam, and I will subscribe to them. I have the honor to remain,

“ Devotedly your’s,

“ HASTINGS.”

MERCIFUL heavens, Henrietta, what a monster! How laconic, yet how determined has he written—to upbraid me with a crime he made me commit—to hint at betraying me! Oh, God, have pity on me! Expose me to the contempt, derision, and triumph of the unfeeling multitude; to the scorn and hatred of my children!—Can I

live, and bear these agonizing thoughts.— True, I may resign Stolina ; resign an orphan, a poor, friendless, and distressed girl to such a monster! Oh! my God, my God, can I do this, and yet live to be the standard of ingratitude and infamy—hooted—scorned—and despised!—or die by my own hand! View the wretched alternatives, and tell me which to choose. Ruin and eternal destruction await me on all sides ; which ever way I turn, despair still faces me.

Lexington — Oh! I have long, long, since tore his image from my heart ; would that all feeling, all thought, all sensation, had abandoned it ; and that everlasting sleep would relieve the miserable

POLYXENA

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

AND why do I not tear myself away from this fascinating Henry? I attempt to struggle with my own heart—fool that I am, to try when I know I have not the power— And yet, Antonia, he must never, never, be mine. This Cecilia is to be the happy woman. Oh! cursed gold, why is thy power omnipotent! Is she not already too fortunate to possess this potent dross; and must she have the best, the loveliest of men too. I could repine at the decrees of heaven; I could ask why I, possessed of an expansion of soul, fit to rule an empire; with a spirit free as air; and an inclination to bestow munificence on all my fellow-creatures—that I should be poor, dependant, the miserable sport of paltry contingencies; the slave of others, without

will or power; chained to the very earth by the vilest of fetters—while others, mean, grovelling, fordid, hardened, and pitiless, —command, triumph, and awe a little world with their frown.—I appear with jewels, but are they not the lavished bounty of another—the alms of compassion; or, probably, of pride!—despicable baubles; oppressive by the recollection that they produce.

I ride in a magnificent equipage—decorated with all the pompous trappings of modern pageantry; the wonder, delight, astonishment, and envy of all its beholders—And yet, does all this pomp draw one thorn away from the many that goads my heart—ah! no; it adds but to the number. Oh, my God!—why give me such a soul, and such a situation! Why heap such afflictions on me, and lavish so much happiness and independence on Miss Montacute? She is expected here hourly—my heart sickens more and more, as her approach draws nearer—her image, such as my fancy has formed it, glides continually before me. I know no peace; I am peevish, wretched, miserable—I would return to you, but have not power; I am a
doating

loating slave; I hug the chain that lacerates my heart, and undermines my existence. The portrait but adds to my woe; I gaze on it till my senses threaten to abandon me. I clasp it to my heart; I embrace it; talk to it as if it lived; then throw it from me. I would forget it, and the original, but I cannot. Oh! what a destiny is mine.

Since the death of my adored mother, I have never known one hour's happiness. How enviable is the fate of the Dutchess, and yet she appears not happy—her beautiful countenance is often overcast, and at times she seems gloomy and buried in thought. Good God, what can she have to disturb her! I should suppose she ought to be the happiest being in the universe; but probably an ill-placed attachment is her bane also—If it is, how much do I commiserate her.

To-day she asked me again some particulars about Lord Hastings; and the time I spent at his house. I fancied the tears were ready to start from her eyes, as we conversed; and once I thought she said, "Poor victim, dear amiable woman."—
" And

“ And do you utterly detest Lord Hastings, Stolina ? ” said she, with a faint smile.

— “ Oh, beyond expression ! ” replied I. — She sighed ; what could be her motive for this question ? Surely he cannot be the object of her attachment. Forbid it heaven !

Miss Montacute is expected to-morrow. I cannot close this till I have seen her. — Oh ! I am sure she is very ugly, very cross, and very stupid — — — — —

* * * * *

— — — — — This Cecilia tortures me to death ! she is not arrived. No, she must keep us in suspense to be sure — she must heighten our expectation. Her delay occasions anxiety, conjecture, desire. — Oh, I cannot stay in the house if Henry loves her. Shall the distinction with which he has honored me, be transferred to her ; whilst I stand by unnoticed and forgotten ? — Oh, God, I could not bear it.

The Duke has never seen her ; he was to have visited her at her convent before his arrival in England ; but the sudden illness of his father occasioned him to be sent for express, and prevented the intended interview. Oh, if she should please him ! my sickened soul turns from that prospect.

Miss

Miss Montacute is an orphan, an heiress, and ward to the Earl of Somerdale, a nobleman, who is solicitous to gain the favour of Lady Theodosia; but she gives him no encouragement. Her fortune, her connections, and the favour the Dutchess avows for her, will be strong inducements for Henry to love her. A quick and agonizing pang shot across my forehead; I must throw up my pen till to-morrow —

* * * * *

— — — — — Another day, and Miss Montacute not arrived; the Dutchess and her daughter are uneasy, but Henry seems perfectly indifferent. As for me, I am weary of this suspense, I wish she would arrive, or come not at all. This distracting uncertainty is worse than the most wretched confirmation — — — — —

* * * * *

— — — — — She is come! This heiress! this divinity! this idol is arrived! Lay still, my fluttering heart; why beat and throb so! — Can Cecilia Montacute, a wax image, a breathing statue, disturb you thus? My head is strangely giddy, and my temples

ples glow with intense heat. I will-seek my eau de Collonne, and return in a moment.

An hour ago we were all assembled in the Dutchess's dressing room, when the loud report of the knocker announced an uncommon guest.

"It is my dear Cecilia," exclaimed Lady Theodosia, clapping her hands, and jumping from her seat. I could not have imagined she possessed half the animation.—"Yes, it is Miss Montacute," said the Dutchess smiling; "fly, my dear Henry." Henry, however, kept playing with his mother's little dog.

As for me, I neither spoke or rose, but I felt annihilated. I believe the family went down to meet their visitant, or least ways attempted; but it was not two minutes before I beheld the lady.

"A thousand times welcome, my love," said the Dutchess, embracing her. She curtsied low—"It is an age, my dear Cecilia, since we parted," cried Lady Theodosia. "It is a long time, returned she, with an inanimate smile.

The Duke approached, and hoped she had suffered no inconvenience from her journey.

journey. Again she curtesied to the ground, and answered with a single negative.

I had kept at a distance—my heart disclaimed an intimacy; but I was presented of course; and the cold forms that etiquette has established, followed.

You wonder I remember such trifles.—Oh, they are registered in my heart; it is impossible to forget them. Enquiries followed, of what had occasioned her delay. She had been indisposed on her arrival at Dover, and Lord Somerdale had kept her there two days.

While these questions were being put, my eyes had run over her appearance, and endeavoured to trace her character by her features. Their insipidity however gave no flattering trait—a strait nose, small mouth, little white teeth, and large blue eyes!

Oh, Prejudice! what a monster art thou?—Why cannot I behold Miss Montacute with impartiality, and tell you she is beauty's self—in fact she is—but you know I ever hated a regular uniformity of features—Nothing in my opinion is so dull, or uninteresting—the eye, tired of the wearying sameness, seeks for variety, and that is
not

not to be found in those very beautiful countenances. Her dress was superb; a loose wrapper of white satin, closed at the front, and frilled round the bosom with broad point lace; her hair is flaxen, with a tinge of the red; it was confined by a fine worked muslin handkerchief; pearl ear-rings, pink slippers, and dogskin gloves. — The servant brought in some refreshment, and interrupted my observations; but my attention was too much interested, and soon returned to the same object.

I could have supposed, after such an absence, friendship would have proposed a thousand questions; but she only sipped her chocolate, and now and then smiled on Theodosia. Henry, like myself, seemed to trace every movement; his eyes were rivetted on her.

I should have felt a pang, but there was nothing like an expression of admiration in his features. The Dutchess put many questions to her, but her answers were little more than monosyllables. About three quarters of an hour elapsed, and then Lady Theodosia and Miss Montacute retired together, leaving the Dutchess, Henry, and myself.

Her

Her Grace enquired of her son, what he thought of his sister's friend. "Think of her," replied he, with a loud laugh, — "why, that she is the prettiest automaton I ever saw in my life. Were I a Pygmalion, I should certainly be enamoured of this beautiful statue; for, by my soul, it is almost a doubt to me, whether she is a mortal, or one of those wax dolls that are made to move on wires."

"My dear Henry," said the Dutchess, in a very serious manner, "you give way too much to this kind of rattling. I admire your natural vivacity, but I very much disapprove of that kind of burlesque which you suffer yourself to come into with so much facility."—"My dear mama," returned the Duke, "if you knew how ill a serious countenance sits on you, you never would assume one; a smile becomes that pretty mouth of your's—you do not know how charming you are (more so than ten thousand Cecilias) when you suffer those sweet dimples to have full play."

Oh, flattery, how irresistible, how omnipotent is thy sway! These few words had a wonderful effect. The Dutchess could only laugh, and the saucy Henry threw

threw his arms round her neck, and imprinted a thousand kisses on her beauteous lips.

Adieu. To-night we shall all go to the opera. I shall pay more devotion to my toilette to-day than I have done yet.

Your's, truly,

STOLINA LUCCHESINI.



LETTER XXXV.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM.

TO LORD HASTINGS.

YES, you shall have fair play. Win her, and she is yours—but beware of Henry, and above all, don't betray me. We shall be at the opera-house this evening;—*le sage intendant un demi mot.*

Your's, &c.

P. W.

LETTER


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LETTER XXXVI.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

GOOD heavens! the wretch Hastings visits at the Dutchess's. He has more presumption than I could have supposed fell to the share of any man. Henry is all astonishment, as well as myself; but the respect and adoration with which he regards his mother ties his tongue. As for myself, I know not what to conjecture, unless I return to the opinion I once formed, that her Grace nourishes a passion for this unworthy man—heaven forbid it should be so.

We had a small party to dinner the day Miss Montacute arrived, among whom was Lord Somerdale and the Earl of Lexington. The company left us as soon as dinner was finished, but these two noble-  
men

men attended us to the Haymarket. The house was crowded. The Dutchess placed her three daughters (as she called us) in the front row, and seated herself with the gentlemen behind. The performance was delightful, and the audience brilliant; it was impossible not to be delighted—I never was more charmed.

The Dutchess saw a lady of her acquaintance, who she wished to speak to, in a box some distance from the one we were in—she left us to go to her, and took her son to attend her. While she was gone, Lord Hastings entered our box; it was between the acts, and we were standing.—You can have no idea how fluttered I was. He bowed to us, enquired of Lady Theodosia after her mother, shook Lord Somerdale by the hand, and was introduced by him to Miss Montacute;—as for me, I was agitated beyond description.

The Dutchess now joined us, and I expected she would have dismissed Lord Hastings; but not so—she bestowed on him one of her best smiles, and received his compliments with a grace all her own. Henry's eyes met mine, and I think his feelings were in unison with my own.—

The

The performance recommenced. I sat down, and I found Lord Hastings did the same. The piece had lost all its charms—it no longer interested or amused me, my thoughts were quite detached from it, and wandered till my senses felt confused and wild.

The Dutchess was in high spirits, talked and laughed loud—our box was soon filled with as many people of the first fashion as it well could hold. The Duke, like myself, seemed lost amongst all this well-dressed mob. Every body appeared pleased and happy, but ourselves, and our thoughts seemed to have united, and centered in one point.

The Dutchess uttered a thousand *bon mots*, her wit was like electricity, it flashed on all around her. At any other time, I should have thought her charming, but really this evening I felt *ennui* and weary. I never seemed more relieved, than when the performance concluded; and I suffered the Duke to take my hand, in order to lead me to the carriage, with more than usual delight. I and Lady Theodosia went home with Henry in his chariot, and I found, on our entering the drawing-room,

room, that Lord Hastings was one of our supper party.

My surprise was uncommon, but as I am convinced of the goodness of her Grace, I am sure her reasons must be very sufficient, or she would never suffer a man to be admitted to my presence who persecuted me with such determined wickedness and malice.

It was not twelve o'clock, and the Dutchess proposed passing an hour at cards. All agreed to it except myself, and I pleaded indisposition;—but the Dutchess's spirits were uncommon—she called me a little coward, declared I only refused under the apprehension of losing, offered to go my halves, placed me on the chair herself, drew her own next it, and insisted on my playing. There was no resisting all this—I suffered myself to act passively. The game was *vingt un*—and when Lord Hastings or myself were the dealer, we were necessitated to speak to each other;—you have no idea what I sustained by this compulsion. This was a night of mortification.

At supper, I know not how, this detested Hastings contrived to place himself next  
me;



me ; and although Henry was on the other side, I was compelled at times to hear myself addressed by this wretch. Nay, he had the insolence to ask me to take a glass of wine with him. I answered hastily and rudely in the negative ; and if an eye-beam could kill, he surely would have been the victim.

I do not know if the Dutchess observed this—but some time after she ordered the butler to fill four glasses of Burgundy ; he did so, and handed the waiter to her. She took one, and desired him to present it to me, and then the Duke. We took the glasses, and the domestic enquired of her Grace who he was to present the fourth glass to ? “ Lord Hastings will do me the favour to take it,” said she, carelessly ; his Lordship bowed and smiled, took the wine, and pledged her Grace. I was compelled to swallow my wine, for Henry drank his, but I thought it very provoking of the Dutchess—and I cannot tell you the ill I wished Lord Hastings.

“ My dear neice,” said the Dutchess to me next morning at breakfast, “ you must not be so scrupulous. I am under the necessity of receiving Lord Hastings amongst

amongst my other friends ; I saw the detestation you beheld him with last night. I do not demand of you to do away your hatred, but I intreat of you, my sweet Stolina, not to shew it so pointedly, for *my* sake.’

Her tone and manner were irresistible. She pressed my hand to her heart as she spoke, and seemed to say, “ Stolina, I have struggled all in my power to banish this unworthy object, but in vain—he is dear to me in spite of my better reason.”—— There was no resisting this. I felt for her most sensibly, and assured her I would endeavour all in my power to conquer my aversion to Lord Hastings. She embraced and thanked me, and she appeared as if she struggled to conceal her tears.— Dearest of women! can you be unhappy, when every thing this world affords conspires to render you most enviable! Ah! happiness is dependant solely on the mind. A prince is oftentimes wretched, when a beggar is happy.

But this Hastings! I shall be compelled to see him, to listen to him, and even to speak to him. It will be a very arduous

task, but the kindness of the Dutchess demands a return of a thousand times more importance.

God bless you, Antonia.

I am ever your's,

STOLINA LUCCHESINI.

LETTER

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LETTER XXXVII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

GOD of Heaven! what a game I am playing—*selling* this Stolina ;—massacring this amiable and lovely girl—and what for? but to add to the catalogue of my crimes ; procuring a temporary release from care, to be doubly overwhelmed hereafter. My reason disapproves the act, yet I am hurried forward by an impulse that I find irresistible.

Henrietta, my dear Henrietta, how happy are you, in a manner away from this detestable world, where villainy alone triumphs.—I am tired of this continual masquerade ; the little vanities, for which all the multitude envy me, I have lost all relish for ; they appear to me trifling and pitiful ; they are purchased at the expence of peace—and secured by crimes and oppressions.

Oh, that I could cast them off! and with them, that load of remorse, that chains me to the very earth.—I grow an adept in vice;—I plot with facility, and execute without fear. Are you not amazed, dear friend?—Ah, I beseech thee wonder no more at any thing that appertains to me!—I have immersed in a wide ocean—and am surrounded by quicksands and rocks!—perdition meets me at every avenue!—and the art I have now to practice, is to ward off the impending ruin as long as it is possible—come it *must*!—but I am not yet prepared to meet it!

Stolina smiles on me.—Sweet innocent, thou knowest not the misery I am preparing for thee.—S'death! I am one of the infernals—and inflict wretchedness, without remorse. Oh! what a fate is mine! forced to carry smiles in my countenance—while I have death at my heart.

Henry, my darling boy, is another of my victims!—Did you ever hear of a mother who could sacrifice the child she doated on?—I,—I am that wretch!—Is there such a thing as disinterestedness in the world? I do not think it.—*Self* is the idol, and I am one of its votaries.—Self-love! contemptible,

temptible, but omnipotent passion, it is you that have undone me!

To retain my secret, I murder a beautiful orphan—and make miserable my son! Well it must be, *it must*!—I cannot bear to be publicly branded with infamy; things will take their course, and I must suffer them to do so.

Farewell Henrietta! pray for me, and ah! that your orisons may be heard. As for me, I am too lost, to offer up any.

God bless you.

POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.



LETTER XXXVIII.

THE DUKE OF WOLSINGHAM

TO THE EARL OF LEXINGTON.

WHAT the devil are we all at?—There is some deep game going forward, and we all appear to be players; every one seems intent on their own cards; I understand nothing of any one's schemes but my own, and they are, to be plain with you, an intire reverence to the *whims* of my mother;—that she, in return, may grant me one when I solicit.

I would as soon marry a Derbyshire petrification, as this sweet, prim, dollish Miss Montacute.—The devil may have your dead and alive females, for me,—who are all condescension; so smooth, so maukish and so d...ed insipid; those tame pigeons are oftentimes very different after marriage, and then, confound their reproaches, it is tears—looks—sighs and hysterics, and the whole train of humbugging finesse.

No,

No, no, give me a woman, whose soul meets mine—who will love me for myself, and not for her own;—who will vent all her little rage in words;—and smile and kiss me when her passion's over:—such shall be my partner, and no Cecilia's.

We shall expect you this evening.

Thine,

WOLSINGHAM.



LETTER XXXIX.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL' ORSINO.

MISS Montacute loves Henry—yes, 'tis evident, or she would have accompanied the Countess of Lexington to Italy.—What am I saying? this is the effusion of fear—of jealousy!—has she not returned from the continent but lately? and I think it strange she does not revisit it.

What I *wish*, I think ought to be—How preposterous is this folly! my head and heart seems occupied solely with one subject; when ten thousand contribute to rack and torment me.—I have much to impart, but really my ideas seem all deranged, and my head bewildered.

On Thursday last, after dinner, which was a family one, and the Duke not present—the Dutchess addressed her daughter, thus,—“ My dear Theodosia,—I have this morning received, from Lord Somerdale, overtures for you, and I have accepted them—

them—Your concurrence I have made myself sure of, as the match is extremely eligible; and though Lord Somerdale is somewhat older than yourself, yet he is very amiable, and your happiness is certain.”

Theodosia was in a moment drowned in tears.—“Why do you weep my love?”—enquired her Grace, “you can certainly have no reasonable objections to this union.” I was all anxiety and tremor—my heart throbbed as if it would burst, and though I knew not why, I was ready to join Theodosia in weeping.

Miss Montacute, as placid and insipid as ever, sat composedly, eating some grapes.—“Indeed madam,” replied my cousin, “I have very great objections.”—“What are they?” demanded her Grace, hastily.—“I cannot love Lord Somerdale.” “Not *love* him, p’shaw!—the age of love and romance, Theodosia, is not the present one.—Miss Montacute, I consider as one of my family, and therefore, I speak freely before her, and tell you my circumstances, demand your compliance;—an establishment so splendid, will secure your happiness.—I have no fortune to give you,

and Lord Somerdale takes you without.—Come, come, dry your tears child, and suffer yourself to be happy, with a good grace.”—“Indeed, indeed, I cannot madam,” cried the agonized Theodosia.—“*Cannot*,” repeated her Grace, with great energy, “why then I presume you are in love with another?”—

Theodosia was silent, and her silence seemed to impress her mother with the extreme of agony;—she was pale and red, fifty times in a minute.—I who observed every thing, saw her lift her fine eyes up, as if she reproached heaven with injustice towards her; and as she endeavoured to suppress a sigh, she pressed her hand with great strength upon her heart.—A pause of more than five minutes followed.

Miss Montacute, with the most perfect unconcern, continued pulling her grapes, and I, scarcely knowing what I did, played with the lock of my tooth-pick case.—Theodosia was still absorbed in tears.—The Dutchess had taken out a smelling bottle and pocket handkerchief; I would have given the world to have retired from the scene, but that was impossible.—At length the Dutchess resumed, in a voice not quite articulate,

articulate,—"I have been waiting some time for your Ladyship's answer to my last question."—"What answer my dear Mother can I make you?"

This was the first time I had ever heard Theodosia call the Dutchess any thing but madam, or your Grace. "You tacitly acknowledge then your weakness—the object, Theodosia, is no secret; it is Lexington you are enamoured of;" and she spoke with great wildness. "But mark me well—a union there shall never be;" and she stretched forth her white arm, to impress more emphasis on what she said. Have you not, in your imagination, the scene before you? Oh! I never shall forget it.

"I have sworn it," continued she;—and my oath shall be sacred, Lexington!" and she almost groaned. "Never, never, Theodosia!"

"Forgive me," cried her daughter, throwing herself at her Grace's feet;—"forgive me; oh, forgive me; for I am already his."—"Married!" said the Dutchess, faintly, and her face was as white as her robe. Oh, her countenance, at this moment will be imprinted on my memory while I live—it was more than despair;

spair ; it was misery, it was madness — her hands were clasped, and she breathed the word, “ married,” with difficulty.

“ Alas! madam, it is true,” replied Theodosia. — A convulsive laugh bursted from the Dutchess, and she fell back on the sofa. I started forward to break her fall—Her situation, her agonies, were indescribable. Theodosia retreated with horror, and was nearly sinking in the same state. Miss Montacute rose from her seat, and exclaimed, — “ La, bless me, only think !” and offered me her salts, to administer to the Dutchess, whom I was supporting. I pointed to the bell—she pulled it, and I desired the housekeeper to attend. The Dutchess’s situation, however, was dangerous ; the aid of us all could not bring her too, and a physician was sent for—he bled her, and she revived. He now requested that she might be conveyed to bed—but she shook her head, for she could not yet speak.

At this moment, Henry, who had been out of town the whole morning, entered. Never did I see surprise depicted so strongly as on his countenance. The porter, who knew nothing of the matter, had let him

him in, and the remainder of the servants were assembled in the dining-room.

“God of heaven!” exclaimed he, “what is all this?” And he rushed forward, and threw himself at the feet of the Dutchess. “My mother, my adored mother, can you not speak to me?” cried he. Her fine eyes, now robbed of all their lustre, rested on him, and a languid smile passed over her pallid cheeks. She pointed to the hartshorn that was on the table; some was put into water, and Henry would suffer no one to give it her but himself. “I am better,” said she, faintly, after she had drank it; “much better. Stolina, love, dismiss all these people.”

The attendants retired; and I attended the doctor to his chariot. When I returned the Dutchess was more recovered than when I left her. Henry was still kneeling, and supporting his mother in his arms. — Miss Montacute was sitting quite at ease; and Theodosia weeping as before. I approached, and enquired how she did— “Quite well,” replied she, with an exertion that I perceived did her violence. But she is an extraordinary woman; with great strength of mind she joins the most violent passions,

passions, and gives unbounded reins to them. I have read, in an English author, lines very descriptive of her ; he says,

— — — “ This woman had a soul
“ Of god-like mould, intrepid and commanding ;
“ But she had passions which out-stripp’d the winds,
“ And tore her virtues up, as tempests root
“ The sea.”

“ No, my dear mother,” said Henry,
“ you are not yet recovered ; let me intreat of you to retire to your chamber.”
— “ Henry,” replied she, “ I am well ; well as I shall ever be ; but I am forgetting myself,” continued she in an austere voice.
“ You, sir, were no doubt in your sister’s secret.” The Duke protested he was unacquainted with her meaning. “ It is well,” resumed she ; “ then I have yet one child remaining.”

“ What mean you, my dearest mother,” demanded the astonished Henry, whose looks declared that he thought her intellects imperfect. “ I mean,” replied she, “ that I had a daughter once, Theodosia Belmont was my child — the Countess of Lexington I know not.”

I am

I am unequal to the remainder of the scene. Suppose us all at her feet, imploring her to revoke the cruel sentence ; but the decree was passed ; it seemed the fiat of heaven. Once, when Henry clasped her hand in agony, and conjuring her to forgive his sister, her emotions seemed almost to overcome her. I saw she was nearly falling into fits again ; but exerting herself with all her power, she snatched her hand from his grasp, and exclaimed, with great energy, “ You will murder me, boy.” He drew back, with horror. “ Go,” continued she, to her daughter ; and waving her hand for her to retire — “ Go ; destroy me not by your presence ; leave me ; let me behold you never more.”

Again we pleaded, but she was inexorable ; and Henry led his sister from the room. “ It is over,” said she to herself, in a faint voice ; and pressing both her hands on her bosom — “ the conflict is over.” She then desired me to order up Monson ; her woman attended, and she retired with her. “ I am going,” said she, “ to dress for Lady Arthur’s rout ; and I shall expect, on my return, all my family will be ready to attend me.” I gazed at her
her

her as I bowed my acquiescence, with a feeling of more than wonder—it was bordering on terror.

Henry returned; he told me he would have attended his sister to her husband's house, but he was afraid of disobliging his mother; and that she had gone in the chariot, attended only by her own woman. He then enquired if the Dutchess had gone to lie down, but I delivered to him the orders she had left; and we separated, and retired to our respective chambers, to dress according to her commands.

You will believe my toilette was not very long; I made very little alteration, and only crowded on a few glittering ornaments. Ah, how true an axiom it is, that externals are often times deceitful. I never behold extreme vivacity, but I consider it a mask to hide the lurking agonies of the heart. In passing the gallery to the drawing-room, I saw Monson in great perturbation, ascending the back stair case. I stopped, and enquired if her Grace was indisposed again. "No, no, my Lady," replied she, with great quickness, "her Grace is quite well." But she shook her head, emphatically, as a contradiction
of

of her words ; but we were just at the door of the Dutchess's dressing room, and she hurried in without ceremony, and shut the door. She afterwards informed me, that her Grace had two fainting fits, and that she had been to procure some vinegar ; that the Dutchess had commanded her to make no disturbance, nor to mention to any one her illness ; that it was the effect of over surprise, and that it would soon go off.

In the drawing-room I found the Duke ; he was passing to and fro with hasty strides, and seemed lost in thought. On my entrance, he came up to me, and with his usual impetuosity, exclaimed, " God of heaven, Stolina, what an affair is this ! " I could answer only by my tears. " Why is my mother thus inexorable ? — Oh, this conduct pierces me to the very soul ! " And he struck his clenched fist to his forehead.

" Why did Theodosia act so clandestinely ? And yet—" he paused — " Can you tell me," resumed he, " the cause of those agonies ; those violent struggles, that appeared in my mother ? " I answered in the negative.

" They

“ They were extraordinary,” said he ; “ surprise could not have effected these ” —and he paused again “ Stolina ! ” exclaimed he, with a degree of energy bordering on wildness, “ the transactions of this day carry destruction with them. I foresee a long train of combining circumstances ; I am undone ; ” said he, in a low desponding voice, that penetrated to the centre of my heart. “ Oh, my fair friend,” continued he, laying his hand on his bosom, “ if you knew what passed here—I adore, I idolize my mother, but never, never—”

Once more he sunk into thought. “ My dearest Stolina,” resumed he, “ the events of to-day have a distressing concatenation with the emotions that fill my heart. I see all my mother’s obduracy extended to me ; for, oh, Stolina, I love, I adore you ; I have ever done so from the first moment I beheld you ; and I feel that I cannot exist without you.”

We had been sitting on the sofa together ; but at the beginning of this unexpected declaration, he had sunk on his knees before me, and clasped one of my hands between his. Surprise, agitation, delight, terror—and a thousand contending

ing passions struggled at my heart. I would have spoke, but I was denied the power.

At this interesting crisis Miss Montacute came in; Henry made an exclamation, and started up—If our two figures appeared to her surprizing; her's, considering her inanimation, was equally so. She held the door in her hand—she seemed absolutely ready to cry, and was at a loss whether to enter or retire. Henry soon recovered himself, and going towards her, begged, with a degree of drollery, she would venture in. She made a profound curtesey and obeyed.—“ I had been exerting all my endeavours (said he) to still the grief of my cousin, but the circumstances of to-day has so unhinged her, that I fear she will be unfit to pay visits this evening. Do you, Miss Montacute, try if you have more influence over her than I have.”—Miss Montacute smiled, came to me, and said something which I did not understand perfectly, and seated herself on the sofa by my side.

A very short time had elapsed, when the Dutchess burst on our amazed sight! Good God! never had I seen any thing so beautiful

beautiful or so magnificent. Taste himself had presided at her toilet, and modelled her his queen. I cannot do justice to her appearance, I can give you but a very faint idea of the figure that absolutely entranced us.

Her petticoat was pure white crape, thickly embroidered with white stones; a loose drapery was crossed twice, and fastened with a large diamond rose on her left side; her gown fell from her shoulders, and was the same as her coat; her sleeves were very full, and were fastened twice a little above the elbow, by two rows of brilliants; her fine bosom was shaded by a double frill of the finest point lace, and round her neck was fastened by a chain of diamonds, a miniature of the late Duke, encircled with the same rich gems.—Her head!—here all description must fall very far short of the reality. I can give you no adequate idea of the vast profusion of flaxen hair she has—it was twisted in ten thousand shapes; part of it fell down loose behind, another division was braided, and one large plait passed through the front of the hair, richly studded with brilliants; in short, it was not to be conceived how so much

much elegance and simplicity could be blended together. I gazed on her with amazement, and exclaimed mentally—"Can that woman be the mother of a married daughter!"

She saw the admiration she had inspired us with, and smiling on all, extended her hand to Henry, who with all his own energy pressed it to his lips. "Go," said she, "one would think you was my lover—and in fact, I do believe you love me a little."—"A little, my mother! oh, my whole soul is devoted to you." She in return imprinted a kiss on his hand, and I saw it was with difficulty she suppressed the tears from gushing to her eyes.—She retreated to the bell, rang it hastily, and enquired if the carriage was ready; being informed it was, we repaired to it, and in a short time were set down at Lady Arthur's. The rooms were pretty much crowded, but who could vie with her Grace of Wollingham!

"She look'd a goddess, and she mov'd a queen."

The men were all eyes, and the women all tongues. "It is monstrous strange," said Lady A. "that the Dutchess of Wollingham

singham still sets herself up for a beauty, and dresses to contend the palm! I suppose her daughter was not brought out this evening, that she might not eclipse her; as for her niece, she is on preferment—and Miss Montacute is a mere automaton."

"They say the Dutchess is extremely poor;" rejoined Lady Grace B. "I wonder how she can be bedizened with so much glitter! but gamesters can dash away to-day, and are beggars to-morrow."

"Her dress is monstrous ill chosen," exclaimed the baroness of C. "what fashions—not a plume nor a colour to give it variety."——Oh envy! how mean, how malignant, how contemptible art thou!

The Dutchess moved on, and extended her smiles to all. The ladies were wonderfully inquisitive after my cousin.—"Bless me, where is Lady Theodosia? I hope she is not ill."—"Certainly she is not ill, or we should not have left her," was the Dutchess's answer to those who expressed themselves disappointed at her absence. Her Grace gave a kind of half laugh, and replied, "you are very good."

"Ah, my Lady Dutchess," said Lady Arthur, curtesying to the very floor,
"how

“how very happy—how very honoured I feel by your presence; really you do so grace a room, as to make every body you visit quite charmed.” “Ah, my good Lady, you are in the habit of saying charming things, but really to-night you are a flatterer.” “Oh no, no indeed, I always speak the truth,”—and the good woman hurried us along to a Faro table that was waiting for us.

We sat down, and soon after Lord Hastings joined us. Execrable wretch! I hate him more and more. We played—the Dutchess lost her money, but not her temper, and she returned home in high spirits; but excused herself from sitting down to supper with us, and retired immediately.

My hand is quite cramped. I have more to add, but must quit you for the present.—God bless you.

Your's,

STOLINA LUCCHESINI.

P. S. Lady Lexington has written me a long letter, and begged my correspondence;—you may be sure I granted her request.

LETTER


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LETTER XL.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

*Thursday Night.*

DO I complain of every new misfortune, that it is severer than the last?—do I brave fate? and say she can inflict no greater torments on me.—Oh no!—I have long ago ceased to do that, I begin to read my own fate more accurately—I know there is no extent to my miseries;—that nothing can soften the TERRIBLE climax that MUST attend me;—but I grow hardened in the school of adversity, and those misfortunes that would crush a less scientific proficient, are regarded by me as trifling episodes in the grand drama;—but the catastrophe! God of Heaven. what will that be!—

Amongst the many trials of my life, none overcame more than one of to day;—Theodosia is married without my knowledge!—need I add to who?—the blow fell  
like

like a thunder bolt, and almost levelled me with the earth ; but I struggled—ah how violently !—and overcame it. My task was very hard ;—my imagination hastily ran over ten thousand events ;—I saw Henry following the footsteps of his sister,—and the gulf of ruin that threatened me was already tremendous ! A great exertion was necessary ; I banished her for ever !—and by so doing, presented an example to her brother.

You may say, I ought to view the business in a satisfactory light :—I have got rid of the girl, without any fortune, or even trouble ;—that my conduct towards her, is a lesson which will deter Henry from a like act, and that he may marry Miss Montacute, as an act of disinterestedness to serve me :—All this is true, Henrietta—but Lexington !—till I found he was lost to me for ever, I had no idea how very sanguine and infatuated my heart was.

Oh how wavering—how uncertain—how distracted is this heart !—but when it should have pity, I find it

—— “ Turned to stone,  
“ I strike it, and it hurts my hand.”

170 THE FEMALE GAMESTER.

I have been ill to day; I am so still, and  
must bid you farewell.

Your's,

POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.

*April 2.*

LETTER

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LETTER XLI.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

GOD of heaven, do I live—do I breathe! whither have I been hurried! Oh, such a scene!—Antonia, my heart is breaking. This cruel Dutchess—she has made me promise to endeavour—preposterous folly!—*endeavour!*—oh, it is an impossibility—Marry Hastings!—did I promise to marry Hastings!—Ha! my brain! my brain, Antonia!—a stroke has fallen, and it repeats to my heart. These agonies, these passions destroy me, even more than my fate;—let me try and calm myself.

The ensuing morning to that day on which the Countess's marriage was discovered, a formal letter came from the Earl to the Dutchess, announcing his intention of immediately departing for Italy, to prevent any *eclat* attending the discovery of a marriage which had been clandestine.—

He wished her and her family all happiness, and concluded with the same coolness and respect with which the letter began.—The Dutchess with equal *sang froid* threw it on the table, without any remark.

Henry enquired if it was not Lexington's writing.—“The letter is there, for any body to look at it who pleases,” said she, and immediately arose and retired. Nothing else of consequence transpired for a fortnight after, except the bustle such a marriage naturally makes in the great world. Lord Hastings was more of our parties than usual, and the Dutchess more kind, more insinuating if possible than ever.

Thus passed the time till this morning—a morning never to be effaced from my remembrance. The Dutchess had been very much indisposed all day yesterday, and this morning was engaged with a large party to go to a rehearsal of music. Being however, too unwell to keep her engagement, she insisted on Henry and Miss Montacute joining the party, and requested I would sit with her in her dressing-room, to keep her company. The affair was evidently premeditated.

She

She gave me a volume of Werter, and desired me to read to her. We have often, my Antonia, read this celebrated book together in the original German; you, however, disapproved it, and I was an enthusiastic admirer of its beauties.—“ You have read this book before, Stolina?”—“ Oh, very often.”——“ Put it down, and let us talk.”

You have seen something of the world, neice; now tell me, if you believe there is such a thing as disinterestedness or friendship in it?”—“ Assuredly I do;” returned I with great animation. “ Are not you, a glowing proof of these virtues, madam; and am not I the object that illustrates your generosity, disinterestedness, and friendship?”

“ You have a warm heart, child; your feelings run away with you. Ah, how you represent what I was at your age; when the animation of youth glowed at my heart, and all was hope, gaiety, and promise; when the vivacity of my imagination painted every thing in golden tints, when my days passed in an uninterrupted succession of sunshine, hilarity, and joy; when all nature appeared to me one glo-

rious landscape, and every fascination of this world seemed appropriated to my use!—Then was I like you, full of confidence, truth, and ease!—but ease, confidence, and truth, are no more. This heart, so full, so fertile, and enlarged, is narrowed by suspicion, and exhausted by disappointment. Distrust, fear, and agony, distort it with their ten thousand pangs. Hope, that seldom abandons us even in death, has long since resigned her place in my bosom to despair;—the demons that divide me, fallow my imagination, and despair's dim optics tinge all things with the same sombre hue."

"Stolina, do you weep for me?"—for her energy of expression, the force of her gestures, and the agony of her fine countenance, declared beyond dispute the truth of what she was asserting, and drew from me those tears which were due to her dreadful state of feelings.—"You bestow these tears on ME, Stolina!" continued she, in a low voice of so much pathos as impressed my whole soul—"oh, you are very good. I have been a stranger to pity, but it is soothing, and I feel it gratifies me;—but I will not rob you of your sympathy

pathy—these precious tears, worthy to be paid at the shrine of innocence—whilst I——my miseries unsettle my reason!”

“Do you really love me, Stolina?” demanded she, in a strong wild manner, and grasping my hand convulsively between hers, “have you the inclination—the power—the resolution to save me from destruction!—Can you bear to behold me stretched out a corpse—made so by my own hands! Hurlled to perdition, with all my crimes—mark me, Stolina, CRIMES! upon my head unatoned for, unforgiven, and augmented by the last desperate act?—Or have you heroism enough, by your disinterestedness to rescue me, to see me on my knees at your feet, to hail you as my protector, the preserver of my life—myaviour here and hereafter!”

I give you her words, but unless you saw the woman, you could have no idea of my situation or feelings. Imagine a countenance so beautiful, so expressive, so heavenly as hers, depicting all these dreadful agonies that had half broken her heart, and threatened her reason;—see her fine eyes robbed of their lustre, filled with tears, and fixed on me full of supplication

—and you will believe my agonies were equal to her own.

I hesitated not to kneel before her;—I conjured her by every appellation the most tender to command me.—“My dear, my adored friend,” exclaimed I, “if it is my life you demand, I yield it with pleasure to ransom yours.—I am but an atom in this vast creation, whilst you have a thousand ties and claims.—See you a corpse by your own hand!—Oh, God of heaven, there needed not this dreadful image to be called forth to induce me to any thing that would save you from one hour’s pain.—Speak but your wish, and you shall find I have no will but yours.”

She raised me from my humble posture. “I will not thank you, Stolina, for words are a cheap coin; and the action I meditate evinces I am destitute of either gratitude or emulation. I should copy your noble disinterestedness, but the power remains not with me.—Yet pause!—your promise is still ungiven;—the task may be too much for you—leave ME to be the victim, and save yourself the trial.”

“You doubt me, then,” cried I mournfully.—“Oh no,” returned she with quickness,

ness, "I believe you to be of all God's creatures the noblest, the most pure and exalted ;—but I am offering to your heart a dagger!"—"Give it me, then," interrupted I, "I will present it with my own hands, and you shall see they will not tremble."—"I have not the power to soften the blow," said she, "I must tell you at once, that what I ask of you is—to become the wife of Hastings."

I did indeed start!—the blow fell heavily. My imagination had presented her request as a promise never to unite myself to her son; and so much did I pay to the feelings of the mother, and the agonies of the woman, that I resolved to make the sacrifice of all my hopes at the shrine of her wishes; but unite myself to Hastings!—here indeed

"—— My soul started back,

"And trembled at destruction."

"You pause, Stolina," exclaimed she, in the wildest despair; "your magnanimity abandons you—you leave me to perish!"—"Oh no!" exclaimed I, "if one of us must perish, let it be me—take me—do with me what you please. I consent—I promise—I will be the wife of Hastings!"

I had thrown myself in her arms, and she suffered me to conceal my tears and sobs in her bosom.—“Wretch that I am,” exclaimed she, “can I bear all this unmoved! Why, Stolina,” said she, in a tone of madness, “do you seek refuge in that bosom which destroys you? Why do you not execrate me? Why do you not hate, detest, and abandon me to a fate my own folly has brought down on me?”

“Hush, hush,” interrupted I, “exhaust not yourself by this violent distraction; but rather endeavour to teach me to bear my fate as I ought.”—“Oh my lovely, my philosophic girl, what a lesson do you present to me!—now that I see you composed, I will thank you;”—and she really knelt to me. “Behold me thus, Stolina! thus humbly do I greet the preserver of my life and fame. Oh, my beloved girl, while I admire and am benefited by your singular nobleness of soul, I envy your greatness, and regret that I have not resolution to imitate you. But you, Stolina, are innocent, and the contemplation of the act will carry with it its reward;—whilst I am so deeply enveloped in works of horror, that they were only to be effaced by blood, or
the

the sacrifice of purity like yours!"——

A pause ensued, in which each of us endeavoured to calm those violent emotions which had so greatly overcome us.

"Stolina," resumed the Dutchess, "I have again a daughter—henceforth you are my child, and gratify my vanity and my feelings by calling me mother. You have done more for me than my own children would have done. To you nothing can accrue by this adoption, for I am a bankrupt in every sense of the word. The world looks upon me as a being of a superior nature. A DUTCHESS is a wonderful large word in the mouth of the vulgar, but I feel myself too acutely the poorest, the most overwhelmed, the most undone *woman* in the universe."

"You think yourself unfortunate, Stolina; but oh, I would give all the world of wealth I have squandered, were it again in my possession, for your situation in preference to my own. Think not then so heavily of your fate, my sweet girl;—and when you call yourself unhappy, suffer your thoughts to wander to me, and whisper to yourself, "I am happy, when compared to her."

"Your

“ Your conduct merits some of my confidence, that I may convince you of the vast difference. You are robbed of the object of your affection—for your love towards my son is no secret to me. Listen when I acknowledge to you, that I too am a victim of the same passion, and that Lexington, the husband of my daughter, is the object of that passion. You unite yourself to a man you dislike, but you will possess every thing this world affords;— whilst I have no one to look up to, am struggling with poverty, scourged by creditors, and a prey to my remorse of conscience! You are not a mother, Stolina; I am—and a *cruel* one.—The poignancy of my feelings are beyond words!

Will you not allow these demand some struggle to bear them? Yet they are light as summer breezes, compared to one dreadful act!——but here I must draw the veil—I can proceed no farther. Pause on my sufferings, my sweet friend, and you will allow yours are not to be compared to them.”

“ Oh, you have all my sympathy, all my pity, and compassion,” replied I. “ I yield myself to your wishes; I will marry
Lord

Lord Hastings ; yet let me beg you, my dear mother, by that sacred name, not to hasten my fate—I will learn to bear it as I ought—I will endeavour to act with propriety—I will strive to teach this rebel heart to submit with a good grace—but you must give me time, or it may break ere it will bend.”—“ You must not talk so, Stolina,” interrupted she, hastily ; “ you pierce my very soul ; you shall have all the time you wish for, I will not hurry you in the least—receive but the visits of Lord Hastings, and I leave it to yourselves entirely to settle what remains. Yet one thing more ; you must promise not to give the least hint to Henry of what has passed between us ; add this to complete your noble conduct, my child, and you make me your slave for ever.”

After having in a manner seen myself robbed of every thing that was dear to me on earth, after having signed the fate of my destiny, what remained was trifling. I gave her the second promise with a kind of inanimate resignation, bordering on desperation. I now see my destiny as clearly as if I held in my hand the book of Fate. — It is true, I shall become the wife of Hastings,

tings, but I shall not long survive it. My heart will break, and I shall not struggle to prevent it; for, oh, an early death is ten thousand times more preferable than a life of misery. Let me suppose I had refused the Dutchess; she would have withdrawn her protection, and I once more must have been abandoned to the world. I will even suppose, pity for my situation had led the Duke to disobey her Grace, and unite himself to me; but then his mother would have felt the victim, and would he not have ever after regarded me as her murderer? Should I not have considered myself as such? Ah, my fate is comparatively happy when opposed to these horrors. I shall die; I feel I am sure of it; but as the Dutchess says I am innocent, the thought of that gives me resignation to bear my fate. Farewell; write to me I pray you.

STOLINA LUCHESINI.

LETTER XLII.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

STOLINA—this noble, this glorious girl, has consented to marry that detestable wretch Hastings!—has consented to yield herself the victim, to save ME.—Would my own own daughter have done this?—Oh no!—and yet she was every thing that was called good and amiable;—but your placid good kind of people are never capable of a great act.—

Would Henry have done it?—Yes, had I used the same arguments to him, I am convinced he would,—but I had not the power, in a direct way, to make him miserable:—I could not bear to be beheld by him ever after with abhorrence,—Now he will impute the conduct of his cousin to the natural caprice of the sex, and pique may lead him to give his hand to Miss Montacute.—But had I claimed the sacrifice

fice from him, he would have regarded me as the wretch who had deserted one child, and destroyed the other for the sake of my own interest.

Ah! what a dreadful picture is this—how glowing the traits, how striking the figures!—yes I am that wretch of a mother,—base, degraded of the name.—Ah, Henrietta, how glorious was my dawn of life!—how bright my prospect!—beauty, birth and education;—and who shall tell me any more, that education is the basis of our happiness or misery below.—No! example perverts the best of maxims—and the passions root up every thing before them;—we find precepts but chimeras, and temptation irresistible.

Who had a more complete education than myself?—a proficient in the school of adversity—a suffering angel taught me to restrain my passions; laboured to convince me all my happiness here and hereafter, depended on the power of governing them; but no sooner from under her eye—no sooner were the fascinating paths of temptation opened to me, and the more seducing examples of others presented to my sight, than I unresistingly became the victim.

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Oh Henrietta! it was *you* that undid me, —you that led me to ruin, despair, and annihilation:—You who taught me, because I unfortunately was a Dutchess, that I must be a MONSTER.

Oh, days of youth! innocence and peace, ever to be regretted!—Would to heaven I could recall them, and exchange my heavy burden of rank and crimes, for obscurity and virtue.—I weep, and my tears are blood! but they wash not my vice away.—Oh God of heaven, why do you punish me so severely!—why make me so criminal? my heart loaths my actions—cruel necessity forces me to commit them.

Farewell,

POLYXENA WOLSINGHAM.

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LETTER XLIII.

LORD HASTINGS

TO THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM.

ANGEL! divinity! goddess! what is this you tell me—Stolina consents to be mine! Thanks, ten thousand thanks for the glorious intelligence. I ask you not for the means by which you accomplished this act; it must have been a grand stroke; surely you used magic. I inclose ten bank notes for a thousand each—this is but a bagatelle—I will express my gratitude at a future period more largely. ~~Adieu!~~ *Adieu*

HASTINGS.

LETTER

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LETTER XLIV.THE DUKE OF WOLSINGHAM
TO LORD LEXINGTON.

AUGUSTUS, this Stolina will destroy me; she is the most capricious, the most ungrateful, the most fantastic little devil in the universe. I am mad; by all that is sacred my brain feels like flames of fire — I have loved this fascinating syren from the first moment I beheld her; and I shall love her for ever. Once she half acknowledged she loved me in return; but now — — — What the devil did my mother mean by countenancing that infernal Hastings; by receiving his visits, and making us all treat him with politeness, after he had attempted to take my life, and endeavoured to seduce her niece?

There is a cursed mystery annexed to it — I do not understand it—Could you believe any woman would tolerate a marked attention from a man, who had proved himself so great an enemy as Hastings had shewn

shewn himself towards Stolina?—Death and d—nation, what can it mean! Why shun me, why listen to him! Oh, that rash promise I gave my mother, never to accept or give a challenge to that execrable monster! but it shall not avail—he shall pierce this heart to the centre ere he snatches the capricious enchantress from me. My mother has hinted that Stolina means to become Lady Hastings. By the great God there must be treachery abroad—but I will penetrate it, though perdition overtakes me. I have seen something like mischief brooding ever since you left England; but the plotters must be careful it falls not on their own heads.

I am wild, I am distracted, and can support it no longer. I will speak to Stolina in spite of herself—I will force myself into her presence, in defiance of the marked solicitude she takes to avoid me; and if this fails, I will throw myself at the feet of my mother, and move her to a commiseration of my fate.

Thine!

WOLSINGHAM.

LETTER

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LETTER XLV.

THE COUNTESS OF LEXINGTON

TO STOLINA LUCCHESINI.

*Lausanne.*

I Have received your letter, my sweet coz, and acknowledge you are right.—I was the former of my own fate, and I ought not to repine—I do not repine.—I love and adore my husband; but to be abandoned by my only parent, to be shook off so cruelly—but I will quit the ungrateful theme, and draw you from your world of dissipation to myself, and this delightful country; for I believe you were never in Switzerland.

A prospect which I and Lexington enjoyed last Friday evening, has made such a delightful impression on my memory, as no time will do away.—We had met with Count de Belvillue, an old acquaintance of my husband's, he was travelling with his son, a youth of fourteen, and his tutor, to an old château he has in the vicinity of  
this

this town; he insisted on our visiting his castle for a few days, and would take no refusal.—There is something so persuasive in the agreeable politeness of a Frenchman, as takes from us all power of framing a denial:—we consented to accompany him, and accordingly proceeded forward.

It was a beautiful clear serene evening, and I was tempted by its fineness to quit the carriage and enjoy the prospect, where richness, from every point of view, baffles description.—My dear Stolina, nature intended me for a cottager—I am unequal to the exertions of a fine lady—I turn with disgust from scenes of high life; but a view of nature, where she really dwells, expands my whole soul, and thrills my heart with a sensation of delight, beyond every thing that is to be described.

These exquisite sensations I experienced most fully on that charming evening.—In the West, was still seen the resplendent glow of sun, scarcely set, while ten thousand golden lights played on a beautiful rivulet, in opposition to those dark masses of rocks and mountains that the eye dared not always penetrate.—The road, sometimes descended into doubtful and lonely glens,  
over

over which stupendous cliffs seemed to hang in ether. On one side, immense caverns appalled the heart! on the other, luxuriant vallies, decorated with all the vegetation of the universe.—Here and there was scattered a goatherd's hut, which added infinitely to the picturesque of this glorious landscape—where all the magnificence of nature on the grandest scale, bursted on the sight.]

I chose to walk up an almost perpendicular hill, where I beheld the waves dashing from precipice to precipice, and losing themselves either amid the darkness of the pines, or in the abyss of a white foam.—The shadows of the night already rested on the vallies, but the horizon was still flushed with dazzling gleams.—The rich yellow and purple lines of the heath and broom,—the distant prospect of a luxuriant vineyard.—The harpers still followed us, and their plaintive and simple harmony dying on the distant air or swelling in the breeze, certainly gave me a strong tincture of superstition and enthusiasm!

We now approached the habitation of a peasant. The family, with some of their neighbours, were assembled on a small lawn



lawn which was before the cottage. The old man and woman were seated under a little portico, over which a vine was reared, and gave it a most beautiful and romantic look. The young folks were dancing, as is usual with the peasantry of this country, to the music of a Savoyard. The dresses of the females appeared to me singularly becoming, and the whole groupe formed a most interesting picture the most lively imagination could suggest. I assuredly shall not readily forget the enchantment of this scene.

It was night when we reached the most compleat pile of Gothic architecture I had ever viewed. Small casements, large rooms, heavy walls, and cumbrous ornaments; nevertheless, there was an air of comfort pervaded the whole, that agreeably surpris'd both Lexington and myself. The Count welcomed us with as much sincerity as politeness—and this you will allow uncommon in a Frenchman; but it is impossible to miscomprehend this charming man. An elegant supper was served up, and we retired rather early.

Our bed-chamber was most magnificent. The pannels were entirely covered with  
large

large pier glasses, which reached from the ceiling to the floor, and these were decorated with branches of oak-leaves and gold acorns. The bed was of pink satin, edged with a deep silver fringe; the cornices were beautifully painted, and at the corners were large plumes of white feathers; at the head of the bed was a festoon of satin, trimmed with wreaths of silver flowers, and drawn by large tassels. The toilet was lawn wrought with silver, and fringed with the same; the dressing-boxes ivory, and the urns fillagreed silver. The lustres were numerous, and on my entrance, I believe there were at least twenty wax tapers burning. You may suppose I fancied myself in a new world, and was almost afraid of deranging every thing I touched.

The *salle à manger* in which we assembled the next morning, was a beautiful octagon; the floor curiously inlaid, ornamented with fine busts, paintings in panels by the first masters, large Etruscan vases on antique stands in a grave stile, and low fanteuils. The windows, down to the ground, served as doors, opening on a green amphitheatre bounded or rather

fringed by dwarf plantations of the most beautiful kind, but such as I had never seen in England, the larch and low firs excepted. These were interspersed with the gayest shrubs and most aromatic plants, throwing all their essence on the gale.

A new elegant green-house, which the Count informed us he had built by an Englishman, formed the point of perspective on one side, through a little vista of blooming vegetation ; while on the other sloping ran a clear stream, that glided gently and translucently along.

The stile of living was sumptuous, the establishment large, and every thing corresponding. The Count is a widower, and about fifty ; his son is a fine youth, with all the fire, vivacity, and enterprize, that so agreeably characterizes the animated season of his life. The marked attention paid me by this charming boy I found highly gratifying.

The same evening he insisted on shewing me a beautiful prospect, as he discovered me to be so great a devotee to the charms of nature. Away we went, and having crossed a bridge, struck into a narrow path that lay between two craggy ridges, overshadowed

shadowed by trees, whose extravagant branches shot into the clouds. Sometimes we saw the cot of a shepherd, perched aloft on the utmost extremity of a grotesque projecting rock. The shaggy chamois, with his demure and leering look, seemed, from a fearful height, to mock our toil. On turning an abrupt angle, an immense sweep of country burst wildly on our sight, obscured in blue haze, while gleams of red spread along the hills. Dreadful precipices were on all sides, down which rolled long streams, and by the roaring of the torrent completed the tremendous solemnity of this grand and majestic scene.

We could proceed no further, without going over a very dangerous bridge which was thrown across an abyss, and made of branches of trees fastened with cord. The young Count presented me his hand, saying, "Step over, madam, there is no danger." I should have proceeded, but Lexington interfered, and prevented me. "It is safe," returned he, with great vivacity, "I would venture my life on it, though I should be counted ever so rash." My Lord, however, was unwilling to run the risk, and the young man gave up the point



point with reluctance. We turned back, and his natural politeness soon overcame the transient glow of vexation.

I must quit you abruptly, my dear Stolina; I have yet two long packets to address to Henry and Cecilia. God bless you! Write me a long letter. Lexington joins me in sending you ten thousand loves, compliments, and kisses.

Yours,

T. M. LEXINGTON.

P. S. I did not forget to call at your convent, and pay my devoirs to the charming Marchioness you mentioned to me.

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LETTER XLVI.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

YOU tell me I deserve to be a saint, and that heaven will reward my resignation— Oh, no, my Antonia, the long dead silence I have not had the power to break into, will forcibly express to you the state of my mind— I am suffering martyrdom; the attention of Lord Hastings destroys me. The Duke too tries every finessè to speak to me alone; but I carefully avoid him: he is grown more impetuous and hasty, and additionally rude to Hastings—they have asked me to name the day that I am to seal my fate—but this I have avoided.

—It is now October, and they have begged me to fix it for the first of Novemeber, but I have not consented positively.— How can one calmly sign one's own death warrant?

We go in a few days to Newmarket ; the Dutchess has a horse that will run for a large sum of money. Oh, God, how can this woman bestow her time and attention on such things ; and by so doing ruin her fortune and character ; and demand of others sacrifices equal to their lives, in order to heal those wounds in her conduct which are the offsprings of premeditated indiscretion. I am ungenerous—I should not reflect on her, because my own fate is involved. It is selfish ; I will fly from the subject. The Duke has, in a thousand ways, reproached me, though not in words—his eyes at times dart indignation—and at others are fixed on me with such melting softness as is intended to supplicate my pity ; and most effectually do they succeed. I am unable to bear these dreadful conflicts. I procrastinate my fate with a kind of forlorn hope ; but these violent struggles and exposures are a thousand times worse than the completion of my fate. A first rate English author says, “ It has been justly remarked, by those who have studied human nature, that it is more difficult to support an accumulation of minute inflictions, than any single calamity of the most terrific
mag-

magnitude.'* I feel the truth of this assertion. The behaviour of the Duke ; the attention of Lord Hastings ; the conflicts of my own heart ; all contribute to overpower me ; and my sufferings are so intense as really to threaten the overthrow of my reason.

At times I am almost tempted to withdraw my promise ; to assure the Dutchess that I find it impossible to fulfil it, and to hastily retreat to our convent, and renounce the world altogether—but the situation the Dutchess too glaringly depicted obtrudes on my mind. I ask myself by what authority I can recall a solemn promise, or how reconcile myself to the idea of leaving her to become her own murderer.

I am wearied with argument and struggles, and believe I shall act like a desperate coward, and rush on my fate with a kind of despondent frenzy ; for what do I delay it ? I ask myself that question a thousand times a day, but can find no reasonable reply—my destiny is inevitable, and I have only to practice the virtue of resignation.

The picture of the Duke has been my constant companion. I wear it in my bosom.

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Hayley.

form. Oh, you know not what I shall suffer in parting with it, which I must do when I yield myself the wife—the victim—of another. I shall give it to the care of the Dutchess, and claim a promise from her of letting it rest on my heart when death has dissolved all ties—this she cannot refuse! and I feel it will not be long ere the dear portrait will be restored to its present situation.

Adieu.



STOLINA LUCHESINI

London,
October 3.

LETTER

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L E T T E R   XLVII.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

**M**Y dear Marchioness, this aunt of mine excites at once my surprise, terror, and pity—I commiserate her actions! at the same time they fill me with fear and amazement. Her conduct at this place has been most singular.

I believe I mentioned to you a horse that was to run here, on which she had many thousand pounds depending. The evening prior to the race she enquired of her son how he meant to be on the course ground the ensuing morning; “for I mean,” said she, “to persuade, if possible, Stolina and Miss Montacute to be on horseback as well as myself.” Miss Montacute expressed her apprehension to be on horseback. Henry joined with her in thinking it dangerous, and offered each of us a place in his pha-

ton—his eyes, which were fixed on me, seemed to supplicate my acceptance of his offer. Lord Hastings, who was present, interfered; he thought the care of two ladies would be too much for the Duke, and hoped the Dutchess would honor him with the charge of one of her wards; for Miss Montacute, by the persuasion of her Grace, is still one of the family.

Henry's countenance glowed at the beginning of the speech; but cooling, he answered—"He flattered himself his cousin would trust herself to his care; and Miss Montacute would commit herself to Lord Hastings's protection, if she was afraid to ride three in a phaeton." The Dutchess, who foresaw the event of this controversy, interrupted it by asking me, with an air of indifference, "Whether I would accept her offer, her son's, or Lord Hastings's?" I could make but one answer, and that was, "I had certainly no objection to riding on horseback." Anger lit up every feature of the Duke. "I will order Phillis out then, and ride too," said he.—"I shall commit Miss Montacute to your care then, my Lord," said the Dutchess to Hastings. He bowed, and the affair was settled;—the  
next

next day arrived, and I was struck with amazement by the appearance and conduct of the Dutchess.

I had never seen a horse-race, and knew not what to make of her Grace, who was dressed, as I understood afterwards, in imitation of the jockies, which are men that ride the horses. In the present case her vanity was consulted, for I had never seen her look more beautiful nor so fantastic—her petticoat, which was of fine long lawn, was made very full—her jacket was a delicate lilac velvet, feamed all over with a profusion of silver lace, and ornamented with rich frogs;—her hair in two broad plaits, was turned up under a jockey cap, such as you have seen postillions wear, belonging to English families, made of white satin, with three feathers bowing sideways—two brush ones of lilac, and the other a beautiful white ostrich—As I gazed on her, I asked mentally if the most exalted rank could excuse such a preposterous love of notoriety.—She was in high spirits, sat her horse with inimitable grace; talked to every body she knew; laughed with some, was stared at by all, and took bets of every body that offered them.—My blood chilled



at this enthusiasm of gambling—I despised and compassionated her in the same instant—At length her horse, which was to run against Lord D.....’s, appeared; upon which she leaped from the mare she was on to see the two jockies weighed—She encouraged her man, made him large promises, and lavished on him a thousand kind appellations.

The race began—the Dutcheſs was here, there, and every where—Lord D.....’s horse came in first; and it was whispered, the Dutcheſs’s man had been bought over by the other party — never did I see such resolution and rage as her Grace evinced. As the poor fellow dismounted she caught his whip, and lashed him without intermission or mercy. Heaven keep me from witnessing such a scene again. The common people shouted, huzzaed, and made a violent noise. Some of the gentlemen clapped their hands, others sent forth loud peals of laughter; the ladies screamed, some even fainted, or pretended to do so. As for the jockey, amazement had deprived him of all his faculties; and the Dutcheſs continued her chastisement till quite wearied—then, with the assistance of one  
of

of her servants, she mounted again; and calling to Lord D..... challenged him to ride round the race ground with her for the whole sum, double or quits—What could he do—he accepted her offer, and away they started. The Dutchess's blood was fermented to an extravagant pitch; she lashed her horse with the fury of a maniac—but altogether, the elegance of her figure, and the ease with which she rode, though the horse absolutely flew, prejudiced in her behalf every one of the spectators; and the word “charming” resounded from every quarter. The Dutchess came in a minute and three seconds before her antagonist, and was received with a thousand exclamations and huzzas.

The Duke, who was greatly chagrined at the whole, was obliged to take her into his arms from the horse, and lift her into a carriage, to be conveyed home, she had so much exerted herself—but though her strength was exhausted, her spirits still remained. She congratulated herself for having gained a pre-eminence in eccentricity. “Women,” said she, “are made a deal of by driving four small horses, or leaping a five-bar gate, but few would attempt

tempt what I did." Her good humour having returned, she sent the jockey a present of fifty guineas, as a recompence for her impetuosity.

Last night she appeared at the assembly, and was, as you may imagine, the universal object of remark, admiration, and satire. Tell me, my dear friend, does not this conduct favour a little of madness—in fact, I sometimes absolutely believe her brain is imperfect, or how could she act as she does?

I am interrupted. Adieu. Antonia, this is the first letter I believe that I have addressed you that contains so little of myself.

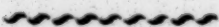
Yours,

STOLINA LUCHESINI.

*Newmarket.*

P. S. The Countess of Lexington is expected hourly in England.

LETTER



## LETTER XLVIII.

STOLINA LUCCHESINI

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL' ORSINO.

**M**Y head is quite light—it whirls, and my brain glows with intense heat. Antonia, the last scene of the tragedy approaches fast. I have consented; the day is fixt, and to-morrow sen'night makes me the wife of Lord Hastings. Henry, cruel Henry, it is you who have accelerated my wretched fate. I shall write to you no more, Antonia. I feel, I am sure, I shall not survive the hour that sees me wedded. Wedded! and to Lord Hastings!—Is there no little spot on earth—no wide common—no barren heath, that would afford me a refuge. Can I not any way shun my fate? No! no! no!—It is sealed, and death alone can annihilate it! — —

— — — — —  
 — — — — — Midnight! With caution and  
 secrecy!



secrecy!—Yes, it is a deed of darkness, and thuns the light—Henry, Henry, how will you support the certainty? Will you hate, detest, and execrate me? Will you wed Cecilia? Shall I never more behold you—and I—I, committed to the tyranny of a husband I abhor. It is folly to dread his power. Antonia—do you think—do you imagine I can survive — — — —  
— — — — —

\* \* \* \* \*

Yesterday, when I retired after breakfast to my dressing-room, I was amazed to find myself followed by the Duke. I had no idea he would have forced himself into my apartment—but he entered without any ceremony, and threw himself on the settee, by the side of me. I started from my seat, and would have rushed out of the room, but he caught me by my arm, and forcibly detained me.

“Why, madam, do you treat me thus,” said he, sternly; “what is it you fear, that you persevere in flying me. I am no rude ravisher, I am not a Hastings—it were well if I were, my fate might be happier.”

What

What a wide field was opened by these few words—what expression did they contain. At once he upbraided me with ingratitude, folly, and impropriety. “For the love of heaven,” cried I, endeavouring to pull from him, “let me depart.”—He gazed on me with a countenance of surprize. “What is it you fear,” he interrogated. “Pray do not detain me, I want to speak to the Dutchess; I beseech you let me go.” The surprize depicted on his features was augmented, and he exclaimed, in a mournful tone, “Stolina, what have I done to merit such severity.” —“Oh, do not keep me,” cried I, in the wildest agony; I must not listen to you; I cannot answer you.” —“Not listen to me—not answer me; and who has laid on you this prohibition?”

I had no longer the power to answer him; tears rushed forth, and denied me the use of utterance; he forced me gently by the hand he still retained into the seat I had risen from, and then continued. —“Stolina, some one has misrepresented me to you. I am convinced some tale of falsehood has been administered, and your mind is poisoned against me.—Have they told  
you

you I am engaged to Miss Montacute?—if they have, I call heaven to witness it is untrue. I have loved you, and you alone, from the first moment I beheld you; and there was a time, Stolina, when I had cause to flatter myself I was not altogether indifferent to you. I am a stranger to what has contributed to change your sentiments; but you must tell me—for I cannot live, and be the object of your hatred.”

I knew not by what means his portrait had gained the outside of my corset; but so it was; and my morning gown being a clear muslin, did not conceal it. At the end of his last words he had sunk on his knees before me; and as his eyes moved from my face to a tear that fell on his hand, they encountered the portrait, owing to the glitter of the brilliants—he started—“What can all this mean,” he exclaimed. “Do you still wear my picture, my lovely, my adorable girl—speak to me; say that you do not hate me—unfold to me the cause of your strange conduct, and give me an opportunity of reinstating myself in your good opinion.” I could only sob and entreat him to rise. “Never, never!” exclaimed he, “till my

my fate is finally pronounced. I feel—I am convinced you do not hate me. You only labour under some cruel error, which I am assured I can clear myself of. Permit me then, Stolina, to do away this mist, and let me lay my hand and fortune at your feet. It is small, but sufficient to secure happiness—and the abundance of my love shall make up for the deficiency.”

I scarcely heard the last words—the emotions of my heart had overpowered me, and I fell into strong hysterics. When I revived, I found the Dutchess supporting my head, Henry still on his knees, and my own woman and Monson administering restoratives. The Dutchess waved her hand for them to retire, as soon as I came to a perfect knowledge of my senses; they withdrew—and she then solicited her son to retire also.—“Never,” exclaimed he, “till my destiny is fixed. Now is the crisis of my fate—I will go through with it, and bear this distracted uncertainty no longer.”

“Rash boy!” cried she in a rage, “Your impetuosity will destroy her.—Leave her now, and I swear to-morrow she shall listen to all you have to say.”

“And



“And do you promise,” demanded he, “not to oppose my wishes?”—“I promise nothing,” replied she. To-morrow—this afternoon—any time—I will listen to you—but begone now. I command you, as you value the life of Stolina, to retire.” He cast one mournful glance on me, and left the room.

“What has passed! Why did I find you in so dreadful a situation, and Henry at your feet in this room?” enquired the Dutchess. I informed her as well as I could of the whole.—“Oh, Stolina,” exclaimed she, bursting into tears, “you will apostatize, and I am undone! You will yield to the entreaties of my son, and the inclination of your own heart. You will marry him, and his Hymen will be stained with the blood of his mother! I cannot—I must not survive the forfeiture of your promise to Hastings!—the moment you recall your word is the last of my existence.”

“Be at ease,” returned I, “for I will fulfil it.”—“Indeed!” returned she with extacy, “oh, then, my glorious saviour, consent to name the day at once. Henry must be a stranger to it—it shall be at night  
the

the ceremony shall take place. Hastings's chaplain will join you, and Miss Montacute and myself will attend you.—Will you say to-morrow?" "Oh, no!" groaned I. "Thursday?"—"Pity me." "Friday, then?"—What could I do?—I assented, with a degree of desperation.

The Dutchess embraced and thanked me again and again, but her endearments were lost upon me;—my sickened fancy presented in terrible array the horrors of my fate, and I regarded her as my murderer.—She this moment enters the room, and I must bid you adieu.

## STOLINA LUCCHESINI.

*November 8th.*

LETTER

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LETTER XLIX.

THE COUNTESS OF LEXINGTON
TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

Brook-street.

I Hasten the first moment, my dear madam, to obey your last injunction.—I have seen my lovely cousin, and she appears to me really in a very bad way;—her looks are greatly altered, and there is all the appearance of an approaching decline.

I hinted it to her, but she ridiculed my fears. I saw her only in a crowded room; I entreated her to call on me, but she declined complying with my request, on account of my mother. There was a wildness in her looks at certain moments, that alarmed me dreadfully.

You, my dear Marchioness, have more power over her than myself; write instantly, I beseech you. Tell her to accept my friendship and protection, if she stands in need of it. I still retain too much re-
spect

spect for my mother, to make this offer to Stolina myself. My brother talks of some mystery that appertains to our charming friend, but he loves—he adores her—he lives but for her alone.—Ah, surely heaven will not suffer them to be separated.

I hear Henry enquiring for me, and must bid you adieu.

THEODOSIA LEXINGTON.


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LETTER L.

THE DUKE OF WOLSINGHAM  
TO THE EARL OF LEXINGTON.

*Grosvenor Square,  
Wednesday evening, Nov. 8th.*

"Oh, let me not be mad—not mad, sweet heav'n!

"Keep me in temper. I would not be mad."•

AND for what purpose is this delay?—  
There is treason abroad—by my soul there  
is! I cannot penetrate their schemes—  
there is deception, and I know not where  
it lies. I ought to be content, but I am  
miserable:

"I could play the woman with mine eyes."

Do not laugh at me, Augustus, but  
there is a dreadful, a heavy *presentiment*  
hangs over me.—I would banish it, but I  
have not the power.—Is it my mother—  
whom I have adored with enthusiasm—to  
whose mercy I have given up my fortune  
—whose errors I have winked at, and  
whose

• Lear.

whose caprices I have indulged—whom I have idolized and adored, in spite of every thing! Can it be her that is the serpent! Is it she that drives me to insanity and despair—or is it this unfeeling, this ungrateful Stolina!

It cannot be her—dear adorable girl! why are her looks so altered!—why that dejection of spirits—that air of despondence!—No, no, it is not Stolina. How dreadful is it to be compelled to accuse one's mother! But she shall not succeed—no, never—Hastings shall never be united to Stolina while I have life.

I pursued the plan you counselled me to:—I forced myself into the presence of Stolina, and laid before her the state of my mind. Her agitation overcame her, and I was compelled to call assistance, to recover her from her illness. She revived, and I was drove from her presence, but not till I insisted on being heard to-day.

This morning I renewed my suit before my mother——“Henry,” said she, “I should have expected from you more love and duty. It was sufficient that your sister married contrary to my inclination—I did not suppose you would have followed her

example. You know how much my heart is set on your marrying Miss Montacute. You know how necessary this match is—yet you persist in objecting to it.”—“ And ever shall,” returned I with fervour, “ I resign you all I possess—I am content to be a beggar—but I will not marry Miss Montacute.”

“ You persevere, then, in offering yourself and broken fortune to Stolina!——” “ Oh! no, no,” interrupted the dear girl, “ let me intreat you to marry Miss Montacute; riches, grandeur, and your mother’s blessing, will attend you—but with me you will find nothing but misery and regret.”

I interrupted the lovely preacher—I threw myself at her feet—I swore but to live for her alone.——“ What can I do!” cried she in agony, “ leave me, my Lord—give me time to reflect before I determine.—Your impetuosity has destroyed me. I must consider of your proposals, and will give you a final answer on Saturday.”——I pressed her hand to my lips, and retired, according to her request.

I have an idea that my mother means to conceal her somewhere ;—I shall not quit  
this

this house till after Saturday. To night we have a route at home, and to-morrow evening we go to the opera. They will not dupe me easily. I know Stolina will refuse my mother nothing—but I shall keep a close watch.

Adieu. Give my sweet sister a hundred kisses for me.

WOLSINGHAM.



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LETTER LI.

THE DUTCHESS OF WOLSINGHAM

TO LADY HENRIETTA BUTLER.

“What! will these hands never be clean!”

OH, Henrietta! I would not, to purchase a diadem, again experience the horrors of last night. My company staid rather late, and I was exhausted, weary, and fatigued, at the time I retired.—I have been in the habit of taking laudanum every night for this month past, and as my spirits had been greatly agitated, I ordered Monson to give me a larger dose than usual. The effect was contrary to my expectations, for instead of lulling me to repose, it disturbed my head—and the horrors I experienced were undescribable.

A thousand dreadful phantoms flitted before me, and sunk me into an abyss of immutable despair! At length, worn out and exhausted, I fell into a kind of broken slumber

slumber—oh, may I never slumber so again!—Methought two bleeding figures, covered with a thousand wounds, lay at my feet. As I gazed on them with horror, I recognized the features of Henry and Stolina! and a deep hollow-toned voice exclaimed, “This is the work of THY hands.”—I raised my eyes to where the voice proceeded from, and beheld the figure of my deceased Lord, who gazed upon me with a stern and angry frown!

I shrieked aloud, and it awoke me. My perturbation was extreme—the very bed shook, and large drops of cold sweat poured from every nerve—the next moment feverish heats consumed me. My heart beat so, as that you might count every stroke—each fibre of my brain seemed bursting! Oh! you can have no idea of what I suffered!

At length, like a tired babe, I lulled myself by sobs and tears into something like repose, but it was not of a moment's duration.—I thought myself encompassed by a thousand fiends, who dashed me down a high and tremendous precipice!—the fall once more roused me. I started—wild—frenzied—convulsed!—the scorch-

ing tears chased one another down my cold cheek chilled with terror.

Oh, Henrietta, were my crimes ten-fold, my sufferings would more than compensate for them all—

* * * * *

This evening gives Stolina to the arms of Lord Hastings. Heaven look down, and compassionate the poor girl, and shield her from despair!—We all go to the opera, in order to mislead Henry—we leave the theatre in my chariot, (that is, myself, Stolina, and Miss Montacute) and proceed to Lord Hastings's, where the marriage is to be concluded. Miss Montacute will be sworn to secrecy. Stolina will return home with us, and to-morrow Henry will be informed from Stolina herself that she is already married.

I tremble for her resolution—God knows if she will be capable to perform the hard task she has to go through! — —

— — — — —

Midnight.

Oh, Henrietta! how can I write the dreadful information! hard indeed, must be my heart, if the power still remains with
me

me of relating the events that have happened.—Stolina is married—she is the wife of Hastings!—but at this moment I would resign my character and life to recall the fatal ceremony.

We dined as usual, and were dressed for the opera. My poor Stolina's bridal robe was a loose mullin morning gown, her beautiful hair was unornamented, and a white satin sash crossed her right shoulder, and formed a bow on the left side. She had not a single ornament on—not an ear-ring. Her pallid countenance and despondent features presented the beauteous victim rather like a corpse than a bride. Oh, how Henry gazed on her, till his very eyes seemed starting!

The carriage was announced, and we proceeded to the theatre. Hastings was there, but did not stay above an hour;—at eleven we retired also. Henry handed us to the chariot, and then returned to the coffee-room to speak to his sister, who I saw was in the pit—but he never left us for a moment while we were in the house.

Stolina had never pronounced a syllable the whole evening—her mute woe conveyed a thousand times more agony to

my heart than the most energetic language. In our ride I said a thousand things to her, but she made no reply. When Hastings lifted her from the carriage, and thanked her for the happiness she intended him, she still remained silent—and her silence impressed me with the most dreadful prognostics.

We were led to the drawing-room, where the priest, and a gentleman who stood father, were waiting. At the sight of this, Stolina started back, and gave a faint shriek. I saw the variations of her countenance, and trembled at the idea of hysterics. I offered her my salts, but she gently put back my hand, and walked forward with that terrible kind of desperation that foretells the most dreadful issue. The party was arranged, the ceremony commenced, and I was compelled to support the trembling bride, whose head sank upon my shoulder. Her voice was barely audible; and the awful "*I will,*" she articulated so faintly, as to be scarcely heard—the marriage concluded, the clergyman stepped forward, to offer his congratulation.

O God

O God of heaven, never shall I forget her figure (which was more than celestial) —as she retreated a few paces, and in a thick mournful voice, exclaimed, “ Married!!! ”—a terrible convulsive laugh that struck to the centre of my soul, followed ; and in the next instant she sunk senseless in my arms—no time was to be lost ; I already dreaded Henry’s alarm at our absence. She was conveyed, therefore, insensible, into the carriage, and my two servants were already instructed how to answer the enquiries of my son.

When we arrived at home, Henry had been there ; and not finding us returned, had again left the house to seek us—the cause of our delay was immediately spread, that Stolina had been taken ill, and we were compelled to stop for assistance. The fainting fit, in which she remained, authenticated this report, and she was conveyed to her own chamber, where I attended her, and sent immediately for Dr. W..... I embraced Miss Montacute, and dismissed her for the night. The Doctor arrived with the domestic ; with his assistance, Stolina revived, but her incoherent ravings were so terrible, that I entreated of him to

L 5

prescribe

prescribe for her a composing draught, which he did. A servant was dispatched for it; and after its being administered, the dear girl sunk into a heavy repose, that by no means prognosticated well.

Henry returned the moment the Doctor retired; and seeing him, he stopped him, and enquired hastily who was ill; he was answered; and rushed towards the apartment, which he would have entered, had I not prepared against this visit, by securing the door. I told him, in a whisper, that Stolina had sunk into sleep; which, if she was disturbed from, might be fatal — he begged, he entreated, to be admitted to look at her, and promised to retire immediately. — I granted his request; her sleep was heavy and disturbed—she groaned piteously, and murmured again the word “ married.”

Oh, how Henry wept; and I felt that every tear he let fall would be registered in heaven against me. It was with difficulty that I got him at length to retire; then having secured the door, I left Monson and Stolina's woman to watch by her bed, and seated myself, and have written so far to you. I could not retire; I trembled

bled at the idea of such a night as the last.
I would never sleep again, rather than ex-
perience such a one — — — — —

* * * * *

Midnight, November 11.

— — And must I be guilty at last of that
act, to avoid which I have committed a
thousand crimes. In truth, I have even
shuddered at the idea of suicide, but now I
am calm, composed, tranquil—one single
hour, and all will be concluded. I am on
the verge of eternity, yet I feel no emo-
tions; in fact, they are all exhausted; the
very stamina of feeling is deadened — my
last groan went forth with the life of my
adored Henry.

Oh, blind security!—I should have fore-
seen he would have disregarded all pro-
mises, when every hope of earthly happi-
ness was broken. I have not slept since I
saw the frowning figure of my late hus-
band—soon shall I join him, and sleep to
wake no more.

The noon of yesterday promised me ma-
ny years of ease — how has the prospect
changed! Henrietta, I am covered with
blood, with the blood of my Henry. Ah,
my

my conscience is still more deeply polluted — The chimes have struck three quarters — one more, and then — I will take a last look at the corpse ; I will behold it once more. As for Stolina, I dare not venture there — — — — —

* * * * *

— — — It wants but five minutes of one—the cup of Lethe stands before me—I have gazed on the mangled form of my murdered Henry—I have seen those beautiful features distorted by the agonizing hand of death. I have imprinted on his cold lips a thousand kisses.

Oh, Henrietta, you was never a mother, and cannot judge the feelings experienced by the death of such a son, which my mistaken conduct has murdered.

My watch is on the table, by the side of my composing draught ; it tells me I have but two short minutes—yet I am fearless and undaunted—one little pang of regret lurks at my heart—I could wish to have died innocent—I should have sacrificed my life to have saved Henry's and Stolina's ; but one is already lost, and I greatly fear the other will not recover.

What

What a load weighs on my conscience! yet I am calm—I do not shudder nor tremble. Hark! the knell of death has tolled my hour—I have the cup in my left hand. Henrietta, I greet you in death; I will drink to your health and happiness in the last beverage I shall taste.—It is passed; I have swallowed it;—and now hasten to repose myself on the bosom of my Henry.

Farewell; a last and everlasting farewell.

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LETTER LII.

THE COUNTESS OF LEXINGTON

TO THE MARCHIONESS DELL'ORSINO.

AH! where shall I begin, madam! It is three months since those dreadful events took place; yet they are so fresh in my imagination as to draw tears of blood from my heart—I have wept—I still weep—I shall never cease to do so—Happiness will never more be mine. I reproach myself as the remote cause of all these tragical occurrences — Had I married according to my mother's wishes, I might have saved my brother, whose extreme vivacity could not sustain the idea of certain misery. Oh, would to heaven I had been the victim—but these repinings come too late; and I have only to regret, lament, and to be wretched evermore.

It was on the Monday that I saw my sweet unfortunate Stolina, at the house of  
some

some woman of fashion, who received company that evening; and I had the honor of writing to you the next day. I was interrupted by my brother, who was desirous of seeing Lexington. My Lord, however, was from home, and we saw Henry no more that day; the ensuing one we received from him a very incoherent letter, that impressed me with great melancholy.

The following evening we went to the opera; I saw the whole family and my Lord Hastings in my mother's box. My whole attention was devoted to my lovely cousin—she appeared to be the representative of silent woe. The music, the performance, were all lost on her—her eyes seemed bent on vacancy; and her thoughts appeared collected and centered on one point.

I now and then caught her eye, and smiled and nodded, but she seemed invincible to my salutations; and her situation drew tears from me, spite of the croud that surrounded me.

Once she cast her eyes to heaven, as if she arraigned its decrees; and her features at that instant were so expressive of misery as to penetrate the inmost recesses of my soul!



foul!—Oh how I longed to speak to her, but she entered not the coffee-room, and departed as soon as the performance was concluded.

Henry immediately afterwards came to us, we talked a great deal about Stolina, and the chariot not returning for him, we sat him down.—My brother's valet, by chance came to the door, and he asked why he had been kept so long for the carriage, "the carriage went out at ten o'clock, my Lord," replied the man; "I know that," said Henry, "but it brought home my mother, and should have returned,"—"My Lady Dutcheffs has not come home my Lord," said the servant.

It was certainly *presentiment* that made my brother speak to the man immediately, and before we quitted him.—"Not returned!" exclaimed he in a tone of horror,—  
"Oh Lexington, what is it that I have to dread? some terrible event impends over me.—Great God protect Stolina!"—Lexington endeavoured to encourage Henry; conjectured, her Grace had only gone to pay some visit, and begged him to curb his impetuosity;—but Henry seemed quite wild, and without bidding us adieu, darted  
across

across the square, and disappeared in a moment.

You may conjecture what a night of anxiety I sustained.—About one o'clock the next day, as Lexington and myself were in the study, Henry entered—his appearance, such as it was, will never fade from my imagination while I exist.—I trembled, and almost screamed, my heart in an instant foretold all the horrors that ensued.

His habit had not been changed since the time we left him:—his hair was dishevelled—unpowdered, and hung on his shoulders;—it was evident he had been weeping much—his eyes were sunk—blood-shot and wild—and his countenance pale as death!—"All is over my good fellow," said he to Lexington, in a way that made me shudder.—"Stolina's lost!"—"How!" exclaimed we, both in a breath.—"Every way,"—returned he, with a most awful solemnity, that struck a chill to my whole frame.—"Lost to herself, to the world—and to me!"

"Oh heavenly Father!"—exclaimed I, clasping my hands in the most agonizing despair,—"she is dead then!"—"Lexington,"

ton," said Henry, "you must come with me, I am going to meet Hastings, it is almost time,"—and he drew out his watch. "Oh, do not go!" exclaimed I, throwing myself on my knees before him, "for heaven's sake do not go—you must not risk your precious self—I conjure you by our faintest angel—by your loved Stolina to desist from your intention!"—"Oh, you drive me mad!"—exclaimed he, striking his forehead.—"'Tis for Stolina,—to avenge her injuries—to rid her of that detestable wretch—that I go."—I looked at my Lord—I thought my poor dear Henry's senses had fled with the life of Stolina, for to me his language was unintelligible. "Farewell my dear sister!" continued he, embracing me,—“if I fall, transfer all your love to my unhappy cousin, and if she recovers, be to her the tenderest and most affectionate of sisters.”—What, does Stolina live?" demanded I, "Yes," replied he, with a heart rending sigh, "she lives, but deprived of her senses,—and last night made her the wife of Hastings."

Oh! the horrors this intelligence conveyed to my heart!—I could not speak, but the tears flowed down my cheeks in torrents.

torrents.—“Augustus, will you go?” enquired Henry, starting up—“My letter mentioned two o’clock, and it is nearly that—once more adieu! dear sister.”—and he pressed me to his heart—I would have prevented him from departing, but he rid himself in an instant from my feeble grasp, and rushed from me. Augustus followed him.—Alas! I beheld my dear—my adored brother no more!—Pardon these large blots, and imperfect characters—my tears flow fast—I am incapable of proceeding, and must quit my pen— — — — —

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh my dear Marchioness, he was young, but unequalled—so noble—so generous—so honourable—the best heart—the purest sentiments—the most exquisite feelings;—the beauty of his person was unrivalled—added to all this, his youth, for he was just twenty—and then drop a tear to his misfortunes and untimely fate!

The instant my Henry and Augustus departed, my thoughts wandered to my mother. I saw all the agonies she must be labouring under;—and, unmindful that I was restricted by her displeasure, I resolved  
to



to appear before her, and offer her all my assistance and consolation. I did not doubt that she was apprized of the duel; and my imagination depicted all the agonizing conflicts she was struggling with. Filled with these ideas, I waited not for the carriage, but proceeded immediately on foot to Grosvenor Square. The very porter was an epitome of the whole house, and prepared me for what I had to expect.

The good old steward, who was a great favourite of my father's, met me in the hall; he shook his poor grey head, and a tear trembled in each eye, as he exclaimed, "Ah, my dear young lady, how happy should I be at your return here, were it on a less dreadful occasion. Alack a day, the times are strangely altered since the death of my poor dear master."

I enquired of him after my mother, and where I could find her. He called to the groom of the chambers, who led me, with a face full of woe, to the dressing-room of Stolina. He just opened the door; and as if contagion was lodged there, without attempting to announce me to her Grace, bowed in silence, and retired.

I paused

I paused—I heard sighs and convulsive sobs—I distinguished too the silver-toned voice of Stolina ; and with trembling steps and a palpitating heart, I entered. Oh, what a scene was here ! — On the ground sat the beautiful maniac, contesting with her woman and Monson, who were entreating her to let them seat her on a couch. — She was enrobed in white ; her fine auburn hair hung dishevelled—never had I seen a form so interesting, so beautiful, or so touching.

Miss Montacute was in the room, and in tears. My mother was on the sofa ; her face and one arm was concealed by her robe, in which she had wrapt herself, and her head laid reposed on the cushions. Imagine, if possible, the impression her situation made on me. I knelt before her, and attempted to condole with her—She just raised her eyes, and fixed them mournfully on me.

“ Theodosia ! my child—this is very kind of you ; but waste not your tenderness on me ;—there are objects that need it more, and deserve it better ;”—and her eyes glanced towards Stolina, In the same instant she drew them away with a sensation

sensation of horror that caused her to shudder, and once more sunk into her concealment.

I drew near to the lovely insensible, whom I understood the physicians had ordered unbounded freedom. I attempted to take her hand, but hastily withdrawing it, she expanded it with a countenance of horror; and pointing to it with the fore finger of her right hand, exclaimed—"I have no ring——Married——Hastings."

Those who could have beheld this scene without agony must have been worse than savages.

"For what do you shed tears?" continued she; "it is only I that have to weep—I have no mother, father, friends, or fortune."—And she sighed. Oh! what a heart-drawn sigh; it penetrated my very soul.

"Have you none of these? No lover? no husband?——Husband!!!" And she shrieked most poignantly. "Save me—shield me! See, see, see he is coming—it is Hastings! Well, well, he cannot harm me—my noble, my glorious Henry has told me so. Where is my gallant protector? He comes not—he'll never come again."

again." Alas, sweet prophet, the piteous sigh that followed, sealed it for a fatal truth.

"Henry! Henry!" sobbed she, "Oh, leave me not, my Lord—there are plots and stratagems that will undo us—No, no, no—Not Hastings—I am thine, only thine—See, see, I am free." And again she expanded her snowy hand; then bursting into a convulsive laugh that roused my mother, and almost petrified me with horror. She started back, as if frightened by some phantom, and arose with precipitancy. She walked a few steps backward, and waved her head.

"Leave me, leave me, now" she cried,—"The Dutchess promised me I should have time—and—and—and——"

She put her hand to her head! the pain, I imagine must have been intense, for she groaned most piteously. Oh, how the woman and Miss Montacute wept; for myself, I almost wished to be out of existence.

She approached my mother slowly—"I will never marry Hastings," exclaimed she, with great energy; "and who shall force me to it?" Then seating herself



self at her Grace's feet, she took her hand between hers."

"I have a treasure," said she; "but tell no one—see here it is—but if Hastings knows it, he will tear it from me—save it, save it," cried she with great eagerness; and putting the portrait of Henry into my mother's hand, "never let him see it, I charge you—lay it on my heart when it is quite stone cold; when it has ceased to beat and flutter, as it does now;" and she pressed her hands with great fervour on her bosom.

"Ah, me!" sighed she, "where, where is Henry—" A loud knock at the door, that shattered every nerve, portended the most dreadful event. Already I saw my brother wounded, perhaps dying; and heaven only knows how I retained my senses.

I beheld my mother rush out of the room; and by a kind of instinct I followed. I saw my brother covered with gore, writhing in agonies; his fine features distorted by the excruciating pangs he laboured with, in the arms of two men who bore him up stairs. The piercing shriek my mother uttered brought Stolina into the anti-chamber, through which they were carrying

carrying my brother. I saw her rush forward and catch hold of him ; and at the same instant I sunk senseless on the floor ; they told me Stolina fainted too ; and they separated her from Henry, who was laid on a couch, in my mother's bed room.

The doctors did not attempt to extract the ball, not willing to add to the pains he suffered, as they unanimously agreed he could not survive an hour. My mother, on her knees, retained him in her arms the whole time he lived ; and Lexington declared, he felt more for her than for Henry.

I entered the room just before my brother expired ; he attempted to press my mother's hand between his icy ones—and he feebly pronounced the words, “ Bless you, my dear mother ! ”—The exertion of speaking seemed to have accelerated his release from agony, for the moment after, he groaned, and closed his eyes, to open them no more.

“ Leave me,” said her Grace, “ leave me to the contemplation of my own works. Begone ! Heed not me—look to Stolina.”

I would not quit her ;—finding this, she rushed into her dressing-room, and fas-

tened the door. All efforts to move her from that retirement, or permitting me to share it were useless; and with a fixed despair, I threw myself by the still bleeding corpse of my ill-fated brother; from which situation Lexington in vain endeavoured to remove me—towards evening he found himself compelled to carry me away in his arms.

I sent Monson to my mother, but she peremptorily refused her admittance.

Stolina had sunk into a slumber, exhausted by continual faintings; and from this the physician entertained some small hopes of her mending.—About ten o'clock she awoke;—her senses seemed perfect; she knew me, but was so weak and low as occasioned us to maintain the most profound silence. I endeavoured to gain admittance to my mother's chamber more than once, but she preserved a continued silence, and the door was fastened.

At three o'clock Augustus insisted on my laying down—I arose again at six, and at eight o'clock I again rapped at my mother's door. I spoke, but no answer was returned. I addressed her again and again; but still the same dreadful silence continued

continued. Alarmed, I scarcely knew why. I entreated Monson to go through the bedroom by the other door.

She went in, but in an instant returned, and bursted into tears. I enquired, with an equal agitation, what was the matter—it was with difficulty she informed me, that my mother laid stretched out, and insensible, by the corpse of my brother—"I wished to God," sobbed the good woman, "I had never lived to behold such a sight."

Scarcely knowing what I said or did, I requested Monson to follow me with some hartshorn; and flew to the chamber. My mother was extended on the floor, at the side of the couch on which my brother lay—Conceive, if possible, what a task was mine.—I threw myself by her side; spoke to her; bedewed her pallid face with my tears; pressed her poor hand—Ah, my God, how I started—Her hand was of an icy coldness, and her joints stiffened—my heart felt petrified—the hand dropped from mine; and I dreaded, yet was unwilling to believe the fatal truth.

I cannot, madam, I cannot proceed with these minute descriptions—they wring my



my heart-strings, and I again see before me those scenes of horror! — — — —

\* \* \* \* \*

My poor unfortunate mother had for some time past been in the habit of taking small doses of ladanum before she went to bed, and having in her possession a large quantity, she had swallowed the whole!

My tears flow fast—I must throw by my pen.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Did I ever imagine I should out-live my Lady Dutchess!” cried poor Monson. “ When I think how good and beautiful she was when she married my Lord Duke, I could never have supposed she would have died so soon, and in so shocking a manner.”

\* \* \* \* \*

I have not yet given you the particulars of the fatal duel.—Henry, on account of Stolina’s illness, sat up the whole night, and when Dr. W. attended at a very early hour in the morning, Henry unperceived followed him into the chamber of our  
sweet

sweet friend; who prior to this had awoke, and insisted on getting up and being dressed, and the Dutchess suffered her to be indulged. They found her wandering in the same pathetic and heart piercing manner that I did; and from what she said, my brother discovered the marriage which had taken place between her and Hastings.

Distracted at her situation, and almost drove to the same state by the knowledge of having lost her, he hastily scrawled a few lines to Lord Hastings, importing his intention of meeting him. Alas! you already know they *did* meet.—Henry fired first, and missed. Lord Hastings refused to return the shot. Henry was not to be satisfied in this way—his impetuosity caused him to lavish on his antagonist the most acrimonious epithets, and forced him at length to fire. The ball entered between the ribs of my poor Henry!

The seconds interfered—but though struggling with the greatest agonies, and standing with difficulty, my brother insisted on the other pistols being discharged. They both fired at the same time, and the ball of my brother laid his antagonist on the earth.

I must

“ I must die! but I am satisfied—for Hastings is no more.”—These were the last words of my poor Henry.—Ah, it seemed decreed by fate that he was to be the deliverer of Stolina, though his own life fell the sacrifice.



Our dear Lady Hastings (for so we may now call her) regained her senses, as I already told you, from the fatal day of my brother's death, and slowly recovered.—After the remains of my mother and Henry were committed to the family vault, the attention of myself and Augustus devolved to our dear Stolina. The physicians ordered her to this place, and hither we have attended her. She is now, thank heaven, perfectly recovered—but busy active memory refers to the past—and she is the beautiful and silent emblem of resignation.

‘As Lord Hastings's widow, she comes into possession of an immense fortune, but I greatly fear she will not long enjoy it.—Grief preys on her heart, and it is not to be wondered at.

Write

Write to her, my dear Marchionefs,  
and endeavour to reconcile her to the  
inevitable decrees of fate.

Farewell, Madam,

I remain,

Sincerely Yours,

T. M. LEXINGTON.

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FINIS.
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